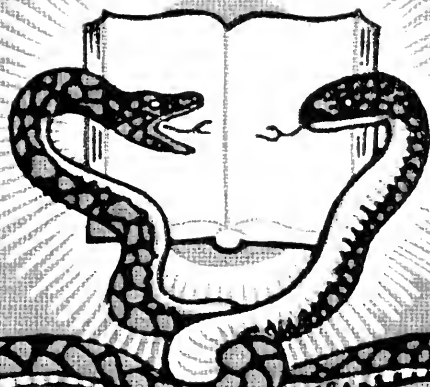


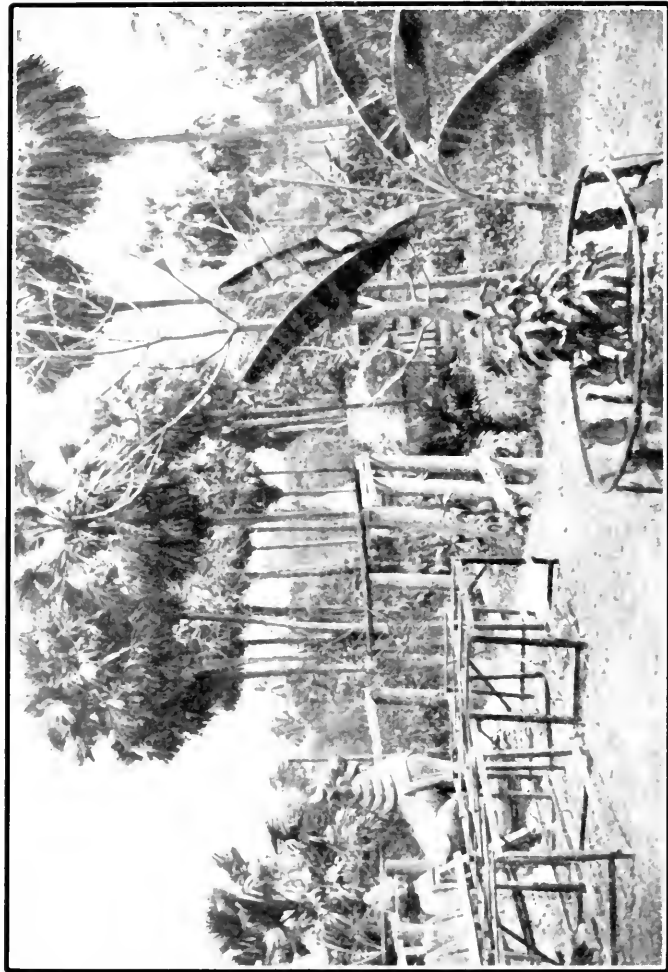
SOO THAH

A TALE OF
THE KARENS

BY
ALONZO BUNKER



SOO THAH



DECAY OF IDOLATRY.

SOO THAH

*A Tale of the Making
of the Karen Nation*

By

ALONZO BUNKER, D.D.

For Thirty Years a resident among the Karens

With an

Introduction by

HENRY C. MABIE, D.D.



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PREFACE

THIS is a true story. While its narration is not always chronological, yet all the incidents herein told are facts which occurred in the experience of the writer, or within his knowledge. All the characters are true to name and life, except Soo Thah, whose real name was Soo Yah. This change has been made in order that certain incidents in the story might be added to his life to complete a true picture.

The aim of the story is to give a photographic view of the daily life of the heathen Hillmen of Burma; of the entrance of the Gospel among them; and of its triumphant results as a transforming and uplifting power.

My hearty thanks are due to my friend, Rev. N. J. Wheeler, for wise counsel and help in the composition of the story. I am also indebted to Dr. J. B. Vinton for some translations of the traditions of the elders; and also to the author of "In the Shadow of the Pagoda," for incidents in the story of Boh Hline, retold from his book.

A. B.

TOUNGGOO, BURMA.

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INTRODUCTION

THE work of evangelizing the Karens of Burma has now gone on for two generations. Its successes have constituted a miracle in modern missions. The God-given men and women who have laboured in it have been intense in character, and the work has been absorbing and all-consuming. Accordingly, those who have known it best, have found little time to weigh the achievements, or to write them up, as they deserve to be. Perhaps this would not yet be done at all if, in the providence of God, the active participants in the work, through physical disablement, were not driven home, where, coming face to face with the supporters of the Mission, endless catechizings compel the tired missionary to take an inventory of stock. From long familiarity with the work abroad, the missionary can scarcely realize how little the people at home know of the process going on in the lives of disciples just emerging from the long night of paganism.

The church should, therefore, felicitate itself that as incidental to Dr. Bunker's last well-earned furlough in America, he was led to present to us the following story of SOO THAH, the Karen convert. Such a book has long been greatly needed. The story is indeed a composite, it is called a romance, but it is true to the life, painted in most realistic colours of feature and setting. It was the privilege of the present writer in the year 1890 to spend several days with Dr. Bunker and his excellent associate workers in the Toungoo field, Burma, from which the story draws its materials. It is a field in which nearly one hundred Karen churches now exist, numbering about four thousand members. In this field may be seen mission work in every stage of its rise, growth, and increasing power,—the raw, uncouth heathen, the awakened convert begging to be taught, the village and station schools filled with cleanly, bright-eyed pupils, the training classes of young preachers, the veteran pastors, and the associational meetings, with thousands of radiant, praise-worthy Christians gathered from the mountain sides of a vast district, absorbed in their new relations to the Kingdom of God.

The reading of this book has brought it all up

with vividness, tenderness and power. Dr. Bunker has used a graphic pen. He has caught the luxuriance of the forests, the grandeur of the mountains, and the soft tints of the oriental sunsets, and made his disciple "live, move and have his being" in a world of reality and charm.

The lands of heathendom are far from being the dismal places which many conceive them to be. There "only man is vile," and, thank God, through the labours of such men as he who tells the story, man also is being reclaimed to be the fit denizen of such scenes as the author so glowingly depicts.

Better still, this well-told story sets before us in realistic touches the making of the disciple himself, recovered from the havoc which sin and demon-worship had wrought. In the story of Soo Thah, we see the child of superstition step by step emerge, develop, expand, and rise to such moral altitude as moves us with new appreciation of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

Then to crown all, in this faithful, concrete presentation of mission work, we see the elements of the process whereby a nation is being new-born in a day; redeemed unto God, and commended even to world-powers, because of the virile results

realized through the union of a divine gospel with human nature in the simple, such as is afforded in the Asiatic hill-tribe men. There is in Burma to-day among the Karens alone, a community of at least one hundred thousand souls pervaded by Christian sentiment. It is the best appreciated and most loyal element of the native citizenship in British India. Such a citizenship is not only a tribute to the Gospel, but also to the benignity of the one colonizing government of Europe which has given fair play to Christian missions. It is "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men," the promise and prophecy of an ultimate transformed humanity.

HENRY C. MABIE.

BOSTON, *May 2, 1902.*

I

SOO THAH MAKES HIS BOW

THEY named the new baby Soo Thah, which means "Pure Fruit." He was a little brown boy with bright, black eyes and black hair, like the other babies in the village. He was put in an oblong, bamboo basket, swung from the rafters of the house by ropes made from the bark of a tree. This house was in a village in far away Burma, Asia. The rude village was perched on a mountain top overlooking a distant plain; and as far as the eye could reach in every direction were unbroken forests of luxuriant foliage.

The house was like a great nest, made of bamboo and jungle wood tied together with rattan, while the roof was covered with woven grass. There was not a nail in the whole structure. It was built on poles, the floor being quite eight feet above the ground. Under the house were hen-coops and pig-pens, made of logs as a protection against leopards and other wild beasts which abounded in the neighbouring forests.

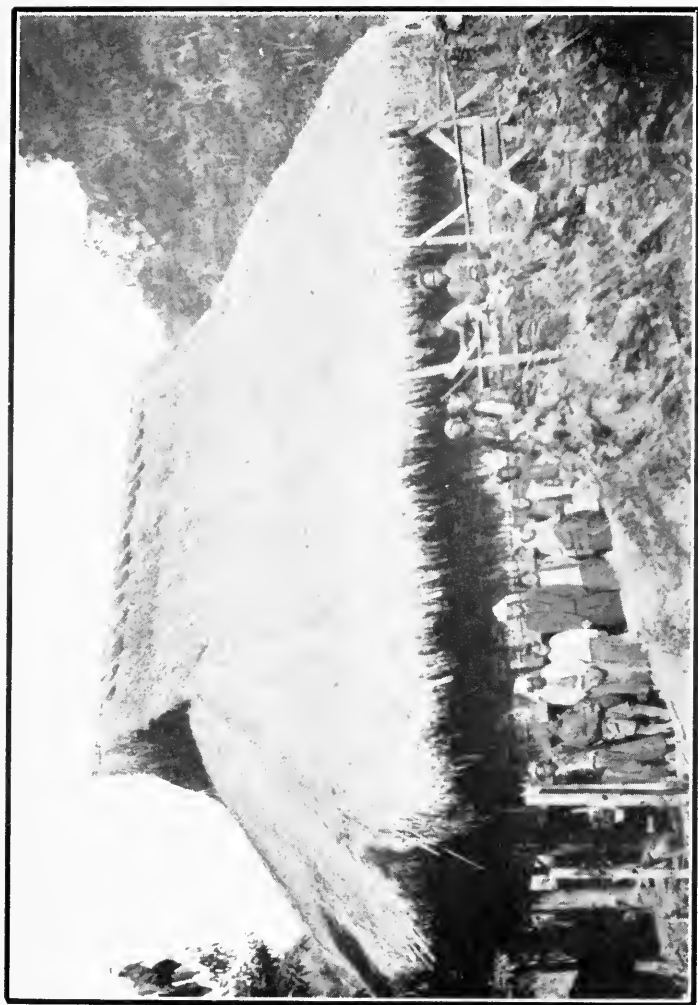
The new baby had no beautiful dress in which to be presented to admiring relatives. A few dirty rags were his only clothing; and yet he looked as contented and cunning as do most babies. And though born in the jungles among a wild people, he began to speak the same language babies use in more favoured lands.

His parents were very fond of him; yet this might not have been true had the baby been a girl instead of a boy; for heathen people do not often set a high value on girl-babies.

Why they named him "Pure Fruit" is doubtful. Perhaps it was because he "looked good enough to eat." Any way, that was his name even when he became a famous preacher of the "glad tidings," and a missionary to his own people.

When Soo Thah was only a few days old his grandmother came to see him. She was bent and shrivelled, looking very much as witches have been pictured; but she thought she knew all about taking care of children. "This is a pretty child," said she. "He must be kept out of the way of *nats*, or they will surely seize his *Kala*, and then he will sicken and die."

These *nats* remind one of the wicked spirits



NATIVE HOUSE.

which our Lord called demons, and in heathen belief they seem to answer to the latter. Both the Hillmen and the worshippers of idols on the plains of Burma believe in the existence of nats, the former calling them nahs. They also believe that everything, animate and inanimate, has a spirit, which they call *Kala*, or *La*, and that these spirits, when separated from the body, live in the spirit country. But we shall hear more of these later.

Now the *Kala* is the food which the nats most crave. Accordingly they go about "seeking whom they may devour,"—the *Kala* of things, or of persons. When they succeed in seizing it, they bear it away from its body, and its owner at once becomes ill, and will surely die if the *Kala* is not enticed back again. Thus the elders teach. Therefore when the grandmother saw such a winsome child, she was alarmed, lest nats should seize its *Kala*, and so cause the baby's death.

She accordingly prepared an offering for the nats of the house, and placed it on the altar in the corner devoted to these evil spirits. Then taking the child in her arms she offered her prayers and pronounced her blessing, after which she tied scarlet strings around its little wrists, neck and

loins. The offering was to satisfy the hunger of the nats, so that they would not pry about the house and discover the baby. If, however, this proved unavailing, the scarlet strings were intended to dazzle the nat's eyes, and so prevent him from seizing Soo Thah's Kala. In like manner travellers in the jungles, where tigers abound, are wont to weave bamboo strips into a square, with large holes in it, and hang this on the lower limbs of a tree near their camp, believing that the tiger's eyes will be dazzled when seeing this device, and so be frightened away.

When the old woman had done all this, she called the father and told him he must never leave the house early in the morning or late at night, as the nats were then abroad in greater numbers than at other times, and they might follow him when he returned home, and so find Soo Thah. Besides, when any one came up into the house, he must not go near the baby for some time, lest a nat might be following him.

The grandmother then had the father make a new ladder by which to enter and leave the house, and new water-buckets and mats of bamboo. He must also obtain new chatties, or cooking-pots, and buy a new knife for preparing their food—

all of which was done by way of precaution. For the same reason when a person dies, the children of the family must have their faces blackened, or the Kala of the deceased may entice those of the children away, with the inevitable result.

When Soo Thah was a few weeks old, his father made a feast, to which he called all the neighbours. During the feast he produced with some ceremony a small hoe, and, placing the baby's tiny hand on its handle, struck the ground three times with it, to show that the child was devoted to the tilling of the soil, and to insure his growing up to be a diligent and thrifty man.

His mother in her constant fear, remembering what the grandmother had said about the nats, had secured at some trouble and expense a tiger's tooth and a few hairs from the tiger's tail, and a bear's claw. These, together with some magic roots and nuts, she had woven into a necklaee for him to wear as a talisman. In fact both father and mother had very little rest from anxiety about their children while they were growing up. Any sickness from lack of proper clothing, or suitable food, was at once charged to the presence of nats; and instead of caring for the child's body the parents in their ignorance did all in their

power to conciliate the dreaded enemy. Without any knowledge of the laws of health, of sickness or medicine on the part of the parents and being slaves to their miserable superstition concerning the nats, what wonder that most of the little folk die very young!

II

EARLY SPORTS AND LABOURS

SOO THAH'S father and mother, as intimated, were heathen, never having heard of the living God. It is true that their elders used to relate stories about a great Nat or Spirit—just which they seemed not to know—who used to love and care for his people; but when they forsook his word, and would not follow his teachings, he turned away from them and left them to themselves. Said these elders, “He never seems to harm us, but he loves and cares for us no longer.”

Hence these people were so busy trying to please the nats, that they had no time to worship the great Spirit, whom they called Yuah. In fact they knew very little about him. But Yuah having forsaken them, they were wholly absorbed in seeking to please those spirits that did notice them, and were aiming to destroy them. Unlike other heathen, they had no images nor any visible objects of worship.

Such being the teaching of their elders, this people, whom the Burmans call Karens (a term of reproach), were quite ignorant of God's care and love. They had no Bible, nor indeed had they a written language until the missionaries gave them one. This accounts for their great ignorance and constant fear of evil spirits.

Soo Thah therefore knew nothing of schools, or meetings for worship, or Sabbath days. To him one day was as any other, save when his relatives made a solemn feast to the nats. In respect to bathing and hair-cutting he was almost a stranger, and as for clean clothes, he seldom wore any at all till he was about ten years of age.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose Soo Thah had nothing to do. For as soon as he could climb a hill and carry a load he was obliged to go to the brook for water, and to the jungle for wood with which to cook the daily food. His father had made him a little bamboo basket, narrow at the bottom and wide at the top and nearly as long as himself. Two yokes one for each shoulder, were attached to the basket and these were joined to each other by a bark strap for his forehead, thus enabling him

to carry wood and water quite easily. The water was first dipped from the brook into the joints of bamboo, used for buckets, and several of these joints were carried in the basket.

It was a great day for him when he could go with his mother and sisters to the jungle for fire-wood, or visit the mysterious forest where he fancied all sorts of strange things dwelt. Often on these expeditions they found the hole of a large mole beside their path, or of the giant cricket; and then came the excitement of unearthing the game to be taken home for curry, which they ate with boiled rice, and regarded as delicious. There was very little that flies, creeps, crawls or runs, that lives in air or water, which Soo Thah's folks were not glad to capture for food. They drew the line at crows, however; though Soo Thah and his companions used to have no end of fun with these birds. When they captured one, the fun began in earnest, for the captured bird was pegged down to the ground on his back, his feet clawing the air. His cries summoned the whole crow family within hearing, and they would swoop down upon their imprisoned companion, calling as if in distress or anger; and some would dash at him with beak

and claw, as if to kill the poor bird. Whatever their intent, it looked as though they thought he was disgracing the crow family or that they were punishing him for his carelessness in getting caught. But it afforded rare sport for Soo Thah and his fellows; for some of the crows in attacking the imprisoned bird got entangled in its claws and were thus held until the boys captured them, and pegged them also to the ground to become in turn traps to catch others. The boys used to say it was a pity crows were not good eating, as they were so easily caught.

Though these little brown children had to work hard from the time they were able to do anything, they managed, as most boys will, to get a good deal of enjoyment out of life. Besides their common bows and arrows they used a bow with two strings; the latter being connected by a net-work where the shaft of the arrow is usually placed. By this device they could shoot birds with marbles made of baked clay. Some also had small bamboo tubes eight or ten feet long through which an arrow, tufted with cotton, was blown with much force. The same useful plant also served for making harps, viols, flutes and drums.

There was also the game of "the fighting cocks," too comical to describe, and that of the rocking-horse. Girls also engaged in these plays. Indeed Karen young people are much like their brothers and sisters the world over. There is a great lizard, a foot long, which usually has its home in hollow trees, or in the roofs of houses. Now and then this lizard would call out loudly, "Touktay, touktay," several times, ending with a long growl. So the young people used to divine as to their future wives and husbands by following the lizard's call. As it called out, "Touktay," a young miss would follow each call with "Old man?" "Young man?" or may be with "rich man?" "poor man?" The question followed by the growl of the lizard was her answer, or such would be the man she was to marry. If it happened to be an old man or a poor man, how heartily her companions would laugh at her!

Thus Soo Thah spent his days till he was old enough to take a big knife and go with his father to the rice fields. Hitherto his life had been full of little excitements; but now, as the sphere of his activities enlarged, his adventures greatly increased. The forests were full of wild animals and birds. Many kinds of snakes also lived in

the deep ravines, where grew a dense jungle of small palms, rattans, and tree-ferns. His father made him a bow as soon as he was strong enough to use one. The arrows were tipped with a deadly poison prepared from the juice of a tree which grew in the deep forest. With this he was often able to kill game for food.

In the forest were also many kinds of monkeys and baboons, the latter almost as tall as himself, which ran hand over hand under the great branches of trees or along the ground. Others called to their mates in the trees, sounding like a lot of boys just out of school. Soo Thah loved to tell of the fine sport he once had with a flock of monkeys which were accustomed to feed on the fruit of a banyan tree near his house. There was only one way they could reach this fruit tree, and this was by the lower branches of a tree standing near by. Along this narrow way a large flock had reached their feeding place with their babies, and had begun their feast. Soo Thah crept up as near this crossing as he could without attracting their notice and then ran with a loud shout, hoping to keep the monkeys on the tree where he could shoot them with his bow. But they were too quick for him, all scampering over

the crossing, the last one just as he reached it. So sudden had been their flight, however, that most of the mothers had left their babies on the tree. Missing them and hearing their calls and seeing that monster at the crossing, Soo Thah said the distress of these mothers was too great to describe. It was very much like human mothers in like circumstances. Soo Thah watched them with great curiosity. They would run down near him and show their teeth, chattering and scolding, as if to frighten him away. The continued calls of their babies only added to their excitement. At last one mother could restrain herself no longer. She would rescue her baby even at the risk of her own life. So she dashed across the bridge, almost within touch of Soo Thah, seized her baby, which clung tightly around her neck, and rushed back again, disappearing in the forest. Soo Thah said she was so brave he could not bear to shoot her.

At midday the great forest was silent. The fierce heat sent all the jungle creatures to their noonday rest. But early in the morning and in the evening the forest was full of life and song. At such times Soo Thah delighted to roam about, or, finding some secluded spot, to sit and watch

the jungle life. There were several kinds of squirrels which afforded him special amusement by their pranks. A saucy red fellow, much like his namesake in temperate climates, as full of frolic as a school boy, played hide and go seek with him. Then there was the great black squirrel, as large as a small cat, with a long and wide spreading tail, which he managed as gracefully as a young lady does her fan. Soo Thah would often sit concealed at the foot of a large tree and draw these to him by imitating their call. But on discovering the deceit, they would scamper away with a cry as of disgust.

In the evening there were flocks of flying foxes—large bat-like animals—calling to each other, as they flew high in the air to their feeding places in the wild mango trees. There were also flying squirrels as large as a small cat, of a glossy, gray colour, and with sparkling eyes. Their fore and hind legs were connected by a membrane which enabled them to skip from tree to tree easily. Of lizards there was no end, bright coloured and dull, large and small, crawling, jumping, flying. They were found largely on the trees or scudding along the ground under the leaves. Land turtles also were seen crawling

over the ridges from one stream to another. As for birds, the jungle at such times was swarming with them, all busy with their domestic affairs—house-building, or feeding and caring for their young. The dark, thick, glossy foliage of the trees afforded them good shelter from the various hawks, which were always watching for them.

The colours of these tropical birds are remarkable for variety and brilliancy; and our boy was constantly making new discoveries in this branch of jungle study. He soon learned about a great variety of birds for which he had his own names. How their brilliant colours flashed in the bright sunlight, as they flitted in and out of the dark foliage, or skipped from bough to bough in search of food, or in play, or shot up into the air among the swarms of flying white ants at evening time! Flocks of pigeons, large and small, swept through the air from one fruit tree to another in search of food, or called to each other from their home-trees. How often Soo Thah had tried to find the home of the hermit pigeon, a most brilliantly coloured bird, which he saw now and then darting along the ground, making for the deepest gloom of the forest!

Then the sad cry of the turtle dove, the loud "hock, hock" of the great horn-bill, the scream of the parrot,—all these cries made up a bird-language in which Soo Thah grew so skilled that he could call many birds as well as animals near, by imitating their cry. It was really a school of languages, as well as of manners and customs of these jungle dwellers, in which Soo Thah grew very efficient, and in which he found special delight.

III

SOO THAH'S FIRST HUNT

SOO THAH advanced rapidly from a student of jungle lore to the position of a hunter, and readily took his place among the members of the family who were working for its defence and support. Being poor, they were forced to depend largely upon the chase for their supply of food. Living also, as they were, amid the great forest, the village people were often forced to defend themselves and their live stock from the attacks of wild beasts, and so needed strong hands and keen eyes.

Among the larger and fiercer beasts were the tiger, leopard, chetah, and bear. The wild elephant also often attacked the rice-bins or destroyed the growing rice. The wild hog and many kinds of deer moreover abounded.

In the denser forests lived a great variety of snakes, their king being the huge python, often twenty feet long. Then there were the hooded family of snakes, which were most venomous. In

the green and thick foliage of the trees a bright green snake, like a long whiplash, had its haunts, where it hunted birds and preyed upon their young. Vipers and deaf adders also burrowed in the sand and leaves.

The python is perhaps the most beautiful reptile in the whole jungle, having variegated and brilliant colours. He always crushes his victim in his coils and then proceeds to swallow it whole. In this way he will dispose of an animal much larger than himself, his skin and muscles being so elastic.

One of Soo Thah's most perilous adventures in early life was with a python. His father one day proposed going in search of a deer, and Soo Thah begged to go with him. He was now a sturdy little fellow, and could easily walk long distances; so his father consented on his promise to go quietly, so as not to frighten the game. His weapon was a spear much longer than himself, while his father was armed with an old match-lock gun. It was very difficult for this wild people to secure modern guns in those days, and whoever had one was regarded as of the honourable and great men of the village. After a long tramp, they reached the bed of the brook, in

which little water was running, as it was the dry season. Here the father cautioned his son again to step softly from rock to rock, as he hoped to see a deer near the brook, where they came to drink. They had not gone far when the father suddenly sprang aside, crying to his son, "Run! a great snake!" With a bound the boy reached the bank. Glancing back as he ran, he saw a huge python spring from the leaves in the bed of the brook and rapidly uncoil itself in the attempt to seize his father. He, however, had jumped aside at the first sight of the monster in the leaves, through which his bright colour flashed a warning, and just in time to escape. Quicker than can be described, he aimed his match-lock and sent a charge of lead through the body of the foe. Ah, with what contortions the monster thrashed about in his dying agonies! But he was soon lifeless, and it was safe for even the little boy to come near him and examine the curious markings of his skin.

It seems that the python also was out on a hunt. He knew in some way that deer and wild hogs were wont to come to the brook to drink, and so with wonderful wisdom he had coiled himself between two rocks and carefully covered

himself with dry leaves. This was the trap he set. Any animal going along the bed of the brook would naturally step over one of the rocks, and so into the trap set for him. This was so cunningly done that Soo Thah was greatly interested in it, and wondered at the snake's wisdom. In fact he was much excited at the whole adventure; yet, like all his people, he appeared as though he were used to such scenes by concealing his feelings.

While they sat resting on the bank of the brook, for of course all other game had been frightened off by the noise, Soo Thah's father said to him, "Dangerous as this snake is, it rarely bites and is not venomous, but beware of the hooded family." The king of this family, the hamadryad (though he called him by another name), is to be dreaded even more than a tiger; for he follows one more persistently. Being of great size, he is as swift as a horse, and can swim as well as run. He may always be known by his dirty brown and grayish bands alternating from head to tail, as if he were a "jail bird."

He then told his son how he once came near being killed by a king of the hooded family. "While hunting, I heard a noise in the dry leaves

and stopped to listen, thinking it was a wild hen scratching for food. But on looking around the noise ceased. Pursuing my course, the same rustling was again heard, but I could not discover the cause. When this occurred a third time, I became alarmed, believing some deadly creature was stealthily pursuing me. And sure enough, as I carefully looked back on my track, there was the monster snake only several rods away trying to conceal himself while crawling towards me. But seeing he was discovered, the snake now rose up fully three feet, spreading his hood, and with glaring eyes and darting tongue gathered himself for a fatal spring. I was too quick for him, however, and a well aimed shot brought him low."

At the conclusion of this recital Soo Thah gave a long sigh, betraying for once much excitement; and as he turned his gaze at the great snake at his feet, he remarked, "I don't think I would like to be hunted by a snake as well as I do to hunt them."

The python being quite dead, they cut a bamboo, fastened the reptile to it, and carried him home where he furnished them a great feast.

There were many devices used by Soo Thah's

people for capturing birds and beasts for food which would be interesting, if it did not require too much time to explain them. These jungle folk were close students of the habits of all kinds of game, and so learned how to plan best for their capture. For instance, a species of parrots at certain seasons used to fly very swiftly in large flocks, always keeping near the ground. Having observed this fact, the natives were accustomed to clear some mountain ridge of trees, thus forming an open space on the summit. Two tall bamboo poles were then set upon either edge of the cutting, and something like a tennis net, only much larger, was stretched between them. The parrots in their swift flight seeing the opening, but not the net, would dash into it and become so entangled that they were easily captured.

But such sports did not fill up the life of our hero. There was the preparation of the fields for the rice crop, the grain on which they chiefly lived. This was a laborious process, in which the whole family must engage from early dawn till late at night. Large tracts of hill country must be cleared of the thick growth of forest trees, bamboo and grass; and all this must be dried and burned before the soil would be ready

for the seed. This required about three months' work. But this hard toil was somewhat lightened, especially to the young people, by anticipating the excitement and sport of the burning day. The time for setting the fires was always determined by the flowering of certain trees; for the elders claimed this denoted the coming of rain. This time having arrived, every man, woman and child able to help, must assist; for it would not do to let the fire get beyond the limits of the field, as it would burn the jungle, and thereby destroy the fields for the next year's crop. For these wild Karens never cultivate the same field two successive years.

First a wide space all around the edges of the clearing was swept clean of twigs and leaves to prevent the fire spreading. Then men and women were stationed all along this cleared space with green branches to watch the fire. All things being ready, at noon time when the dew had been thoroughly dried away by the sun, the elders gave the word, and the torches were applied in a dozen places at once. What a grand sight was this fierce burning of hundreds of acres of dry brush and grass along the mountain's side! No wonder the boys ran about in utmost excite-

ment, capturing game that had been driven from the brush by the heat, and anon shouting to each other as they fought the fire here and there which had leaped its barriers, eager for a race through the dry leaves, and away over the hills. The sun was quite shut out by the dense clouds of smoke, leaves and cinders carried upward by the current of heated air. The roaring flames, as they danced and leaped, and flung themselves heavenward in great tongues, formed a picture never to be forgotten.

After the ground was cleared came the planting of the rice. This was quite a tame affair. The reader may know that highland and lowland rice differ greatly in the mode of cultivation, though not in appearance. Highland rice is cultivated like wheat, while the lowland is raised in from four to six inches of water till it begins to ripen. The great difficulty in cultivating the former arises from the multitude of weeds which grow with it, requiring much hard labour to keep them down. This Soo Thah learned to his sorrow, for he was obliged to rise with the dawn and toil till dark in company with others during both rain and sunshine—and it rained most of the time. Only thus could the weeds be kept down until the harvest.

IV

TOILS AND PERILS

THE rice harvest was the great hope of the Karens. The interest of the whole year's work centred in its ingathering. If the crop failed, the year would be one of great hardship, if not of famine. The utmost care therefore was bestowed on this product from the time of sowing until the joyful reaping. Not only must the weeds be repeatedly cut, for they grow in that tropical climate with a vigour unknown in a temperate zone, but close watch must be kept night and day to guard the growing crop from hostile incursions.

Soo Thah was now obliged to take his turn with the rest of the family in this work. His father had made small huts mounted on high poles in different parts of the field, from which long bark strings ran like telegraph wires in all directions. These strings were so tied to pieces of split bamboo, that when they were pulled a loud clapping noise was made, which frightened away birds and beasts.

Wild hogs were specially troublesome and destructive. They came in large herds during the night, and if not at once frightened did much damage in a few minutes. Therefore Soo Thah sat many a night alone, or with a companion in one of the watch towers, pulling the bark strings, and fighting mosquitoes, while fear of nats and wild beasts made the hours drag slowly.

At such times, while gazing into the darkness, or up to the twinkling stars, he did much serious thinking. This all came out in his after life, when he used to relate the night-thoughts of those early days. "Are there really so many evil spirits around us, as the elders say? Do they truly hate men? And are they fond of men's Kala, ever seeking to seize and devour it? If not, why do men sicken? Why do they grow weary? Why do wild beasts kill them? Is there a great Nat, or Spirit named Yuah, of whom the elders tell us? Where does he live? Where is his country? Will he never love men again and come back to take care of them? Where do people go when they die? What is the Kala anyway? How can bad men, when they die, become man-eating tigers, as all the elders declare?" Then lifting his eyes heavenward and seeing the myriad stars,

flashing like gems, he would continue his musings :
“ The stars ! what are they ? Are they really holes in the earth’s cover to let the glory of Yuah’s country shine through to men ? Shall I die if I begin to count them, and stop before I have finished the count ? ” The sun also and moon were very strange to Soo Thah ; and he could make nothing of all the thousands of mysteries with which he was surrounded, for there was as yet no voice to answer his eager questions. Yet he kept on thinking and questioning.

When the harvest was over, and the rice, millet, chillie peppers, pumpkins and other produce were all gathered into bins, Soo Thah had time to join his companions in ranging the great forest in search of game and adventure. A stock of dried meat must be laid in for the season when they would be engaged again in clearing their new fields for another crop of rice. And he soon learned how to make and set all sorts of traps and snares for the different kinds of birds and beasts in the jungle, and also for fish found in the clear mountain streams.

His father had prepared several pitfalls on narrow mountain ridges in paths made by deer and other animals. These were deep and cov-

ered with leaves and twigs so that the surface looked like the surrounding ground. Thus the wild beasts would not discover the trap till they had fallen into it.

When tigers and other wild game were about killing the pigs, goats and fowl, he knew how to rig a spring-pole which, when set off by a wild beast, would send a sharp bamboo spear into him. His father had taught him how high from the ground the spear must be placed to pierce the tiger's heart, by measuring his foot-prints. Or, if not successful with the spear-trap, there was the big log-trap baited with a live goat. But Soo Thah said he did not like that way of trapping tigers, for he could not help pitying the poor goat.

One of the most vivid memories of his childhood, he used to say, was that of the sudden confusion and alarm arising from all the people in the village crying out and violently beating the floors of their houses, when a tiger made a night visit to their village for plunder. One incident in particular had filled his heart with hatred for this king of the jungles. When tigers become old and have broken teeth and claws, so that they can no longer pull down their victims,

they sometimes lose their natural fear of man, and become "man-eaters." Soo Thah well remembered how, one night, one of these tigers had seized an old man in their village, a special friend of the children. Long afterwards he could vividly recall the last cry of the old man, as the savage beast bore him away into the jungle. All the village raised a great noise, as usual, to frighten the beast, in which they succeeded; but the poor old man was so badly injured that he died.

Among other beasts met in their hunting expeditions were bears, both black and brown. If come upon suddenly, they were specially dangerous; and they seemed to have a spite against the human face, always seeking to mangle it in a close attack. Soo Thah was as much afraid of these beasts as were his people, but he showed such daring in battling them, that his friends became very proud of him and predicted he would become as great a hunter as his grandfather, who had once slain a wild elephant. One of his adventures became the talk not only of his own village, but of others also. This is the story as told by his companion:

"One of our neighbours had a daughter named Paw Wah (White Flower), who was

sent with food to a party in the jungle. She lost her way and wandered about a part of two days and a whole night. Among others, Soo Thah and I went in search of this poor girl. After travelling some time and seeing no signs of her, we came to a deep ravine full of rattans, small palms and other bushes. Suddenly, with a frightful growl, a large black bear rushed out of the thicket and up the opposite side. He looked as large as an elephant, to my surprised vision. Firing at him I inflicted a wound. He suddenly turned and charged straight for us. In this dilemma I know not how Soo Thah felt but I had a strong impulse in my heels to run somewhere. He however stood his ground and began firing at the advancing brute. How he growled and howled! It was frightful. He made almost as much noise as a mad elephant. A bullet hit him, for he stopped in the dense thicket and tangle of palms which he had left at first, and there he remained growling with an occasional howl. The elders were always warning us of the danger of approaching a wounded bear or tiger. I dared not venture into the thicket. However, when I saw Soo Thah, who was several years younger than myself, standing his

ground so bravely, I plucked up courage, for I felt ashamed of my fears. I wanted that bear, but saw not how we were to get him. So I said to Soo Thah, 'What shall we do? How shall we get our game?'

" 'Why, shoot him,' he replied.

" 'But we can't see him.'

" 'We will go till we can see him,' he said.

" 'What, do you dare go near that raging beast?'

" 'But we can't leave him now. We must go into the brush and shoot him.'

" Finding he could not be dissuaded, I joined him, for I was ashamed to appear afraid. We then carefully loaded our guns, took our large knives in our hands, and began cutting a path through the tangle, where occasional growls showed the bear to be, Soo Thah leading the way. Suddenly there was a rush and a roar, and the sound of Soo Thah's gun at almost the same moment. His bullet was true to its mark, penetrating the head of the beast, and with a final growl he fell dead. What a monster! We could hardly lift one of his legs. We called help, and it took six strong men to carry him to the village, where there was great rejoicing." Thus did Soo

Thah's companion relate the story of his killing his first bear.

Every one must recognize his bravery in this deed. Would that he had been as brave in all things as in his hunting expeditions, but he was not. Reared amidst heathen superstitions, he was cowardly in respect to the unseen powers, such as imaginary nats and ghosts. It was a very important matter that would induce him to leave the house after dark without a torch and a companion to keep him company. In fact no one in the village would take such risks as that.

Before we close this, however, the reader will be glad to know that Paw Wah, after wandering about all night in the forest, was found the next day, brought back to her home in safety, and not much the worse for her adventure.

V

DEMONS AND FAIRIES

IT is difficult to realize the conditions, unfavourable to everything good, in which our hero received his early education. Could we forget all knowledge of a loving and care-taking God, with all the good that comes to us from this knowledge, and at the same time have all hope which comes from Him taken away; and instead be forced to live constantly alert, lest we offend some of the hostile spirits that we believed to be ever about us, then could we better understand Soo Thah's life.

The elders of the village as well as his father had taught him many things about the vast multitude of nats, which he must on no account offend, if he wished to live. These nats have already been introduced to us by Soo Thah's grandmother. The laws governing men's intercourse with them were many and hard to keep. "Where do they not take up their abode? One can't turn about without offending these miser-

able spirits," said Soo Thah. So it was. Some, as we have seen, lived in the roof of the house, and altars were kept standing in one corner for offerings to them to keep them good natured. Were one to doubt their presence, he would, as sure proof, be shown their tracks in fine ashes, which had been placed in a flat dish on the altar. The doubter might think the tracks had been made by mice, but he could not make the people think so. They were made by nats, and that ended the matter.

Some nats lived in the dark and gloomy recesses of the forest, others had their abode in the rocky cliffs, others in the water-fall, or in some great tree, as the banyan. Then there were the field-nats, which fed on the Kala of the rice. If you sought to run away from these evil spirits in any one place, you were sure to find others just as wicked wherever you fled.

Soo Thah well remembered how he once went with his father and little sister to look at some fish-snares near a large water-fall. The little girl caught cold, and in the afternoon became quite ill with fever. It was all because of that wicked nat of the water-fall, said the father, and so they must go that night and make offerings to

it to save the girl's life. These consisted of a tiny house of bamboo, like a doll's house, in which were put bits of food; and then a prayer was offered to the nat to release the little girl's Kala, which he had seized, and another to the Kala, beseeching it to return lest the girl die.

How much time, money and anxious care were spent by Soo Thah's father in trying to appease all these nats, that the family might escape sickness, and the crops might not fail! It thus appears that all this nat worship sprang from fear. How could they love such wicked spirits, that were only selfish, and never sought one's good?

Sometimes the remembrance of the great Yuah would arise, especially at feast times, when the prophets and story tellers recited the ancient traditions concerning him. But, as has been said, they firmly believed that he cared no longer for his rebellious children.

Besides Yuah, there were said to be fairies, about which there were many pleasing stories: how they helped men, as their friends; and as they were friendly, no offerings were required to propitiate them. Indeed, there was no place for gratitude in their religion, as we have in ours. While we give thanks and offer acceptable praise

to God, these jungle people never conceived such a thing in their worship.

Soo Thah believed all that the elders had said about nats, and was very unhappy over it. He felt there was a great injustice somewhere, but concluded it all came from rebellion against Yuah—a natural conviction. But one thing always made him angry with the nats. His father had lost an eye in his boyhood, and he always said an angry nat had done this, though he could never account for its anger. This seemed to Soo Thah so cruel, that his wrath was aroused as often as he thought of it.

Soo Thah however became very skillful in all the ways of nat worship, for he was quick to learn, and though only a boy, he was often asked to assist at nat feasts, especially when any one was sick, or the crops were poor; and this because of his proficiency in reciting the prayers.

During these early years, he was much under the care of an aged aunt, who had never married. The reason given for her remaining single was that she had an enlarged neck—a deformity often found among mountain people in some parts of India. This aunt, named Miss Kaw Do (Miss Big Neck), had picked up much knowledge about

nats and all sorts of things; and she was thoroughly skilled in all these superstitions. Her stories of ghosts and witches were so thrilling, Soo Thah said, that even when he had learned a better way, the recollection of them would sometimes make the cold chills run through him. As for fairy stories, she revelled in them to the delight of all the young people who had the pleasure of her acquaintance. She never tired telling these stories. Soo Thah spent much time with this old aunt, and her stories formed a large part of his early education.

It should be known that in India, where these events happened, there are only two seasons each year,—the wet and the dry. There is no autumn, nor winter. Frost is never seen, except on the highest mountains, and the people call it “the heavenly flowers.” The southeast wind blows seven months in the year, and then the northwest wind fights with it till it conquers. In fact twice in the year there are, in the mind of the Indian people, terrible battles between the mighty wind-nats, in which the “great nat of the fire” and the “rain-nat” take a large part. At the changes of these winds, called the change of the Monsoon, these fierce battles rage overhead, and the

fiery darts of the one, and the floods of water poured out by the other to quench these fiery darts, with the cyclonic winds of the wind-nat, all made a grand and fearful strife in the heavens, which to the mind of this simple people is only a battle of the nats.

The goddess or nat of fire was called Law-pho, and Miss Kaw Do used to tell Soo Thah how Law-pho had great wings, and that when the lightning flashed across the face of the sky, it was Law-pho flapping her wings. When a thunder bolt struck a tree, she said that Law-pho had dropped her golden axe; and that if any one would only dig in the ground at the foot of the stricken tree, he would surely find it and become very rich.

She told him also that the banyan tree was the chosen home of the nats, and that he must never talk aloud under it, nor pick up sticks, nor build a fire there. She further assured him he would become rich, if he could only get a piece of a rich man's blanket, who had died, and make for himself a purse of it. Another of her sayings was, that crowing hens must be killed, or they would bring sickness upon their owners.

There were many rules about strangers coming

up into a house, which must be carefully observed by them, or accident or illness would befall some member of the family. Moreover the stranger who had transgressed these rules must pay a fine.

She told him of persons with whom she was acquainted who had dared to eat flesh while harvesting their rice, and that their rice had wasted away, or did not last nearly as long as it otherwise would. Another of her whims was, that monkeys were specially dangerous to the crops during harvest, so that the reapers must never call them while engaged in their work, lest the rice should disappear. And if, while harvesting, chickens were hatched, or a child was born into the family, all work in the field must be stopped forthwith; but, added Aunt Kaw Do, the reapers should never omit eating chicken or wild-cat curry with new rice from the field, in a new hut outside the village, where they would be free from the contamination of strangers. If a stranger should come among the harvesters while storing rice, he must not be allowed to depart until the work should be finished. And when hulling the rice for food, none must be left until dark unfinished; for the old aunt said there was a bird in the forest which would begin her night-

song at dark, and any one eating rice cleaned after it began its song would surely become ill. This she knew from observing many instances of the kind.

Then she taught Soo Thah all about the wonderful Kala; declaring that it often wandered away from the body, especially during sleep, thereby causing dreams, and also some kinds of sickness, in case it did not return promptly. She also assured him it was dangerous to awaken any one suddenly, as this sometimes caused insanity; because in the sudden return of several Kalas to their respective bodies, they became mixed, and thereby some got into the wrong homes.

Even the rice-bins and rice had their Kalas, she said, which caused much trouble by their wanderings. One of the neighbours failed to make his rice-bin strong enough to hold the rice put into it, and it broke down. Aunt Kaw Do was sure the Kala of the rice had become offended in some way, and was going to desert them. So they called a nat doctor, and went through the usual offerings and prayers to appease his offended lordship. In the meantime the young men repaired the bin, making it stronger, and the nat was propitiated.

VI

MORE ABOUT FAIRIES

THE Karens are a story-loving people, and their folk-lore is very extensive. When young people meet, their chief amusement is story telling. These stories strongly resemble the folk-lore of different and widely separated races. For example, the story of "The Turtle and the Rabbit," narrated by Uncle Remus, is found among this people almost point for point.

Soo Thah never wearied in hearing Aunt Kaw Do's stories, which seemed numberless. Among them was one that told how the ox stole the original horns of the dog, while the latter was bathing and had laid them aside on the bank; thereby causing the dog evermore to bark at the ox when meeting him. Another told how the bear lost its tail; and another why there are white hairs in a fox's tail.

There was one story about the disobedient daughter, which always made the boy sad. Her mother had forbidden her going into the jungle

alone, lest she should be harmed by nats or wild beasts, but she disobeyed. While wandering in the forest, a powerful nat met her and turned her into a little bird. Towards sunset this bird now flies about in tree tops, calling out in the Karen language, "O mother, my mother!" The bird begins this call slowly and repeats it faster and louder till it closes with almost a wail of pleading and distress. This, the Karens believe, is the disobedient girl searching for her mother. Aunt Kaw Do used to point out the bird and bid Soo Thah listen to its call, as a positive proof of the story.

Almost every peculiarity in nature was accounted for in like manner. It was an ignorant Karen indeed, who could not give a reason for anything marked or odd.

But those wonderful fairy stories! How eagerly Soo Thah listened to them! There was one he used to beg his aunt to repeat again and again. It was about the Karen Ceres, or goddess of grain. Her name was Pebeyaw. The tale begins in a real story fashion, thus: The ancients say that there were two orphans, a brother and sister, who were left very poor. At their father's death, he was able to leave them only a four anna

piece (equal to about five cents). The neighbours were very selfish, like most heathen people, and left them to struggle on as best they could. They were only able to live from hand to mouth.

After some time, to add to their trials, a famine fell upon the land; and when all food was gone, the villagers planned a trip to a distant town to buy rice. Though they had only a four anna piece, the sister urged her brother Pokray to go with the villagers and buy food. He replied, "What can we get for four annas? It will not buy more than enough for two days."

His sister replied, "It cost our parents much labour and care to rear us, and life, which comes with such difficulty, should not be lightly cast aside. Let us do all we can to save our lives, and, maybe, some good fairy will help us out."

Pokray plucked up courage at these brave words, and took the four anna piece, and set out after the party. He was not suffered, however, to join their company, for he was an orphan, and according to the belief of this people, his presence would bring bad luck to them. Therefore he was obliged to follow them at a distance, or just within sight.

In due time they reached the town, and bought

their rice, filling all their baskets. But poor Pokray could buy only a few handfuls, which he tied in a corner of his head-dress, and then followed the rest of the party back towards home.

As the villagers journeyed together, they saw an old woman caught in a creeper in the jungle, beside the path. She was very old, and her hair was white. Seeing them passing, she called out repeatedly, "Do, please unbind me, and set me free!" But the people said one to another, "We can indeed unbind her, but she is old and hungry, and we shall be obliged to take care of her; and so she will eat up our rice. Let us leave her to take care of herself."

Soon Pokray came along with his heavy heart and light load of food; for he saw nothing but starvation before him and his little sister, whom he dearly loved. When the old woman saw him, she called out as before, and he stopped and listened to her. Then he said to himself, "I must die anyway, and what matters it if I die a little sooner by doing a good deed? It will be better thus." So he went and carefully unbound the poor woman, setting her free. Then a marvellous thing happened; for though she looked to be very

old, she began to dance and sing like a young girl, very much to Pokray's amazement.

Turning to him she said, "Now hurry on, my grandson, grandmother is very hungry. Get home as quickly as you can and cook me some rice."

At this his heart fell again, for he had not enough rice for one, to say nothing of three. But he dared not disobey. When he reached home, having run a little ahead of the old woman, his sister, who had seen her coming with him, said, "How is this, brother? Why do you bring a stranger to feed, when we have so little for ourselves?"

"Father never turned even a dog from his door," answered Pokray, "and this rice is bought with his money. We will not disgrace his memory; but will follow his example, and when the food is gone, why, if there be no help, we will die in honouring our parents."

Then the old woman came up into the house. As the reader has doubtless surmised, she was a fairy. On entering the house she exclaimed, "Hurry up now and cook grandmother some rice. She is very hungry."

So the little girl hastened to clean the rice of its husks, and then she put all of it into the chattie (an earthen cooking pot) to cook it. When the old woman saw this, she exclaimed, "How extravagant you children are! I don't wonder you have so little to eat. Put only seven kernels into the chattie, and cook them."

"Seven kernels!" exclaimed the girl in great astonishment. "I can cook a chattie of rice, but who can cook only seven kernels?"

"O, you children! You talk too much. Mind your elders!" replied the old woman.

So in fear the girl obeyed, counting out seven kernels of rice, and putting them into the chattie, when another marvel occurred. Pebeyaw took out the seven kernels, as if to count them, and as she put them back one by one, behold they became seven double handfuls, quite enough to fill the chattie; and when cooked, all had a full dinner.

Well, it fell out, the fairy mother became so pleased with the children, that she took up her abode with them, and of course they suffered no more from hunger.

But when the villagers heard of this good fortune which had come to the orphans, they were

deeply moved, and said, "We saw the fairy first, and so she belongs to us." Then they chose a committee of the elders to call upon the orphans and present their claim to the fairy by right of original discovery. When they reached the house, however, the fairy mother treated them with scorn, and said, "I belong to those who had pity on me when I was helpless; and I shall remain where I am. You can return to your homes." This they did in great shame.

Then the story goes on to relate how this fairy mother helped Pokray cut a new field for rice of great extent, and how she went out to the field at sowing time, and danced and sang her wonderful song, which caused the rice to come like rain and plant the field; for she was the goddess of rice. The rice flew from the ends of her fingers and from the hems of her garments, as she danced, until the field was fully seeded.

When the crop sprang up, everybody said there never was such a growth of rice in the hills, nor such a harvest as Pokray had. But the village people were far from being pleased. Moved with envy, they got together and planned to steal Pokray's whole crop. Accordingly, having summoned all the surrounding villagers, during a

moonlight night they harvested the whole field, and carried it all away, save seven bundles, which were accidentally dropped on their way home.

But Grandmother Pebeyaw was equal to the emergency; for she commanded Pokray to make seven great bins, and put one of the bundles of rice in each. This done, she visited each bin in turn, and began her wonderful dance and song, calling upon the rice to come to its mistress. And lo, all the air was full of rice, coming from the bins of the thieves, and it rained down into Pokray's bins one after another until all were full. Well, in short, Pokray became very rich, and Pebeyaw, as the story goes, returned to heaven to look after her house, saying she was afraid it would be all mussed up by the hens during her absence.

With such stories these wild Karens taught their children that those who honoured their parents would become great and receive their reward.

VII

THE FEAST

THE story of Soo Thah's youth and early education would be incomplete were we to omit the more solemn feasts and blood-feuds or tribal wars of his people. In fact these were the most important factors in his education, as a heathen lad.

The fact has been noticed that the Karens do not worship idols, but fear and try to propitiate nats, or demons as they are called in the New Testament. Among these tribes, which are numerous in northern India, southern and eastern Thibet, western China and throughout Burma, there are distinct traces of the ancient worship of Jehovah. As we have seen, some of these tribes have a tradition of God under the name of Yuah. Now this name is apparently the same in its root as Jehovah, or Jah, the memorial name of God among the Hebrews. And besides, the Karens have quite circumstantial traditions concerning the creation of the world, the fall of man, the

expulsion from a garden, and the subsequent sinfulness of the race, which substantially agree with the Bible accounts of these events.

Once in three years the tribe to which Soo Thah belonged met in a solemn feast, wherein all quarrels were settled, offenders rebuked, and children instructed in the virtues of respect to parents and elders, industry and honesty. This tribe had a priesthood which was hereditary. The full number of priests were four, the eldest being high priest, and their office was for life, or as long as they maintained a good character. When one of the priests died, the elders assembled in council to decide to whom the vacant office belonged by inheritance; and when this was determined, the preparation began for installing him into his office.

Earrings, a headband of silver, a richly ornamented suit of clothes, and a silver-mounted sword were secretly prepared. After this a chosen delegation took the gifts and went to the house of the proposed priest. One of the committee went ahead to ascertain if the candidate was at home, and if he was, the company surrounded the house, so that the man might not escape. This he must always feign to do. They



KAREN MISSION IN TOUNGOO.

then cast the presents before him. If he really desired to escape, he might possibly do so before the house was surrounded.

If they did not find him at home, they laid wait for him either by the path approaching the house, or in the house itself. Sometimes one would climb up under the roof of the house and conceal himself until the man returned. When he appeared, the presents would suddenly fall at his feet. When once these gifts of the priest's office had been presented, he could not refuse to accept the life-position to which he had been chosen.

The elders appointed the time for the triennial feast, at which these priests were to officiate. They first notified all the surrounding tribes of their intention, and closed the roads to travel by tying grass and bushes across the path. If any one ventured to disregard this sign, and to enter the country of the tribe thus engaged, before the roads were opened again, it was counted lawful among these Hillmen to inflict any punishment upon him which the elders might pronounce, even death.

A committee selected the place of assembly in the jungle outside the village. This must have a large tree in the centre, and be carefully cleared

of all brush. Booths were erected around it by the different families. The whole tribe was requested to be present during the exercises. Yet women were excluded from the clearing. They might, however, look on from the surrounding forests or hills.

When the space was cleared, a large elevated booth, or priests' house, and an altar were built of bamboo near the large tree. The altar was placed in front of the priests' house.

The young men now scattered in the forests in search of the tallest and best bamboos they could find, one for each village. There was much rivalry between the villages to see which would find the most perfect bamboo. When found, they were brought to the feast-ground with care, so as to receive no scar or injury, and with shouting and dancing were erected near the large tree.

In the meanwhile a large basket of bamboo had been woven. Mats also had been made in prettiest patterns, one for each priest. The offices for the weavers were hereditary. During these preparations, the elders had been in search of a sacrificial victim, which must be a black male pig, without spot or blemish, or perfect in every part. The pig having been found, it was bound, carried

to the feast-ground and laid upon the altar. By this time all the men of the tribe had assembled. The young men had sought out the priests, seized them, and, with some show of resistance on their part, had carried them upon their shoulders to the house on the feast-ground, where they were seated upon the prepared mats.

Everything being ready, a proclamation was made by the priests to the assembled multitude, calling upon any one who had lived a blameless life for the last three years, to come forward and help judge the people. Then the judgment began. The high priest took a sharp knife and, standing before the bound pig, harangued the assembly in a loud voice. He warned them against all offences, and pronounced judgment upon offenders, indicating the infliction of judgments by cutting off an ear, or the tail of the pig, or by making gashes in different parts of its body. Finally, the animal was slain, as a type of what would befall the most incorrigible offenders, or those who would not repent and reform.

The pig was then cut into small pieces amid the shouting and dancing of the people, who also drank freely of rice whiskey, which had been

prepared for the occasion. Each family then retired to its own booth, and a fowl, provided for the purpose, was killed (one for each family) by the head of the family. He then cut off the beak, the claws and the tips of the wings, which, with bits of the liver and heart, he made into a small bundle, wrapped in leaves. This he took to the priests, who placed all the bundles in the large basket that has been mentioned, over which prayers were offered to the nats.

Following this each head of the family took a new bucket and went to a clear, running stream, where one of the priests met him; and, standing in the water, filled his bucket for him. The water was then taken to the feast-ground and poured out before the altar.

The priest then gave to each man a piece of the pig, and all returned to their homes, where with certain ceremony they cooked the pork and fowl, and ate them with bitter herbs and rice flour. Every member of each family must partake of the feast without fail, and every one must declare the food to be pleasant to the taste, however unsavoury.

This done, all returned to the feast-ground again, each one taking with him a small stone,

which was placed at the foot of the large tree. The priests, who had meanwhile been carried home by the young men, were now brought back in the same manner as before, again making a show of resistance for reasons which will appear. When all were once more assembled, the more serious part of the ceremonies began. The high priest, standing before the altar and pile of stones, boldly denounced the known offences of all present. Young men who were lazy, or had been dishonest, or disobedient to parents, or disrespectful to elders; thieves, and those who had committed graver offences were called out by name and stoutly rebuked.

“I came not here of my own free will,” the priest declared. “You brought me here by force, and now listen to my rebukes. If you do not repent and reform, may these stones, which you have placed here, follow you all the year, and be witnesses against you. May they be thorns in your sides, and blast your lives, make you ill, or slay you.” Having thus scored all offenders, the assembly broke up with shouting and dancing.

These stones formed no small part of the religious belief of the wild Karens. Many chiefs were great only because of the stones they pos-

sessed. Any stone of curious shape, and especially precious stones, were supposed to have miraculous power. It was indeed a species of stone worship.

Such solemn occasions had a great effect in moulding the character of one so quick to learn as Soo Thah, and did much to prepare him to receive the gospel, when he heard it, and to make him a brave and earnest preacher of the "glad tidings" in after years.

VIII

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

IT has appeared how various and full was the life of our hero and of his people. Their days were replete with interests and excitements, different indeed, but similar to those of more favoured races. In fact human nature and needs are much the same the world over. If there was nothing else to mark the unity of the race, this fact would do it. These wild people sleep and wake, make love, marry, engage in their daily tasks for food and clothes, care for their children and friends, seek recreations in plays and games, or in self-indulgence in bad and vicious ways, seek relief from injury and pain, grow old and die, just as do people in Christian lands.

Ignorance concerning the better part of man, the spiritual, rests upon them like a heavy pall. Herein only do they differ from their brothers and sisters of enlightened lands. In short, they need the same Saviour that enlightened nations

must have or perish. Civilized races would doubtless be like these heathen, if they had not received the gifts of the Deliverer.

Soo Thah's people, besides their belief in good and bad spirits and worship of demons, had also their wars and rumours of wars. Like the ancient Hebrews and many other nations, these Hillmen have their blood feuds, which are carried on from generation to generation, destroying whole families and tribes, unless a strong government, or the gospel comes to their rescue.

Much of Soo Thah's early life was passed in these excitements. He soon learned the rules governing these feuds in their descent from father to son through generations. The master of the feud between his people and the tribe beyond the eastern mountain range lived in his village. Had he not often heard him and his father discuss the origin of this feud, and recount their battles, with the number killed or carried into captivity? Had not his blood leaped as he listened to the brave deeds of his ancestors? How often had he played with the little captive boy in the next house, who had quite forgotten his parents, having been taken from them when only two years old. Had he not

often stood on the mountain top, just back of the village, and seen the smoke rise from the homes of his father's enemies, on the distant mountain range?

The terror of these enemies was now to come nearer to him than in mere report; for some of Soo Thah's clan had made the last raid, and had captured several children and buffaloes. In this raid a poor old woman had been speared to death, and her husband badly wounded in defending her. So, according to the law of the feud, her children must avenge their mother's death. Blood for blood must be exacted.

Rumours of an attack upon Soo Thah's village, after rice harvest, were circulating, and caused grave fears. Spies had been seen lurking about. Report said they were preparing arms. All this put Soo Thah's folk into a fever of apprehension, and the women and children dared not sleep in their houses, but went into the thick jungle where they made booths not easy to find; for in these feuds attacks were usually made just before day, when people are supposed to be in deepest sleep.

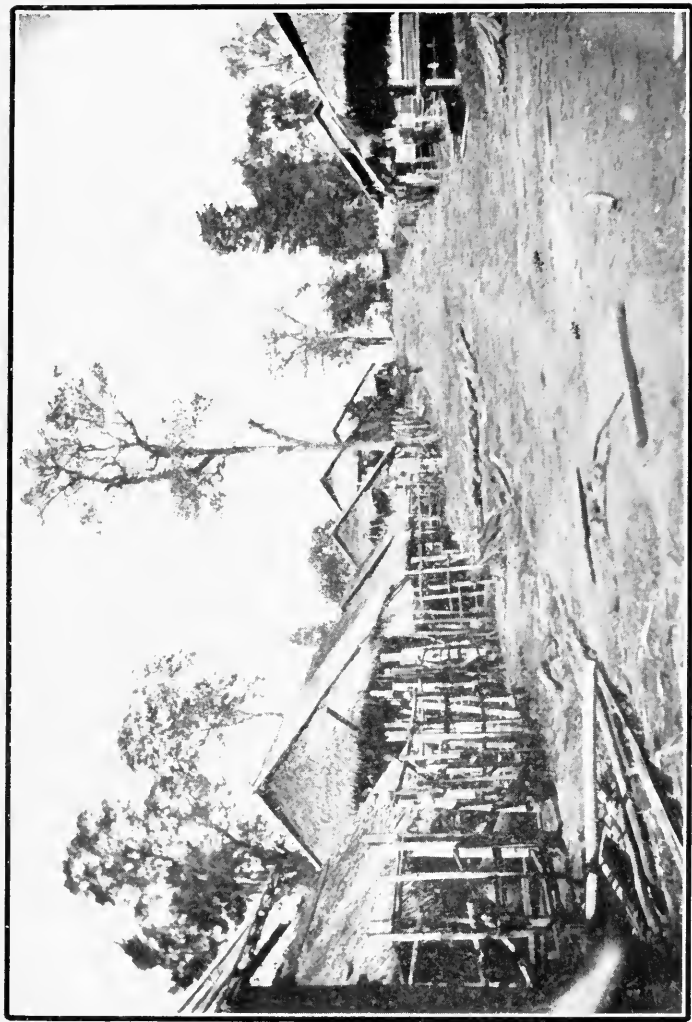
The village was stockaded for defence, with narrow entrances, and sharp bamboo spikes had been planted all about to pierce the feet of any

attacking party. While the women and children slept in the jungle, the men stood on guard, or remained in their houses to defend their property.

What a time of excitement among the children! And what bravery Soo Thah and his playmates showed during the daytime! In play they went through mimic battles in which, of course, the enemies were beaten in shameful defeat. These young warriors, armed with their small bow-guns and spears, presented a valiant appearance until nightfall, when their glory departed. Every shadow filled them with dread.

The rice harvest had been gathered and the beautiful harvest-moon illumined all the jungle with its silver light. It should have been an occasion of Christmas festivities; but this people had never heard of the Christ of God's love. The women and children had been sleeping in the jungle for several weeks, and as the threatened attack had not been made, they had become somewhat reassured, and on this bright night a number had returned to their houses for sleep.

Suddenly, about the second cock crowing, or at four o'clock in the morning, there was a great shout, and a body of men, having eluded the watchmen on the paths leading into the village,



KAREN VILLAGE.

dashed among the houses, firing guns, and shouting like demons. It was the long threatened raid.

As the houses were built high from the ground, and as the Karens always draw up their ladders at night, the enemy could not easily enter them, while they were the more easily seen by the defenders. The battle was short and sharp. The attacking party succeeded in entering the chief's house, where they captured and carried off Soo Thah's playmate, little Pau Gree, or Beautiful Flower. An infant was captured from another house, with several copper drums, much prized by the Hillmen. Several buffaloes were also taken, but they were unable to get away with them; for the villagers rallied so quickly, that the raiders left one of their number dead, and bore away several wounded with their captives. Some were also wounded in the retreat by the wooden spikes planted about the village.

In giving an account of the battle years after, Soo Thah said he could never forget the terrible confusion of that night attack. What with the screaming of women and children, barking of dogs, squealing of pigs, and shouts of the combatants, he was filled with horror whenever he

recalled the experience. The two children were afterwards redeemed at great cost, and, of course, as blood had been shed, Soo Thah's village was bound to make a return attack to wipe out the disgrace and avenge the shed blood. Happy to relate, however, a messenger of the Prince of Peace reached the village with the "glad tidings of peace on earth, and good will to men," before the return was made, and it has not been made to this day.

IX

GOOD NEWS

WHEN Soo Thah was about fourteen years old, startling reports began to circulate among the Karens of the arrival in a distant city of "White Foreigners," a man and woman, who were quite different from anyone who had ever appeared in the country.

Soo Thah's uncle, Shway Dee, had been down to the city with a basket of neem seed to trade for salt. While there he had lodged with a Burman friend, for whom he had performed some service in time past, and there he heard the strange news.

Shway Dee's friend told him that he had seen the new sayah, or teacher, for this he claimed to be, and had had a brief talk with him; that he could not understand him very well, as he spoke the language so imperfectly; yet, as far as he could make out, he set forth a new and strange religion. "He even dares," said he, "to affirm that our royal and golden footed Lord Gaudama, the great idol at Shway Dagon, whom all the

world worships, is only a piece of brass; and that there is a living God, who loves and cares for his children. When I asked him," continued the Burman, "if he had seen him, and where he lived, he seemed confused."

"How did the white man come to Burma?" asked Shway Dee.

"Oh, he came in a ship, of course."

"Did the ship have white wings?" anxiously asked the Karen.

"Yes, I suppose so, if you call sails wings."

"Did he come from the east, or from the west?" continued Shway Dee.

"From the west. All foreigners come from the west," said the Burman.

This was enough for Shway Dee. He hastened back to the hills, and made his report, which flew over the country like a forest fire in May.

Now these hill people were expecting a Deliverer,—just such a fulfillment of prophecies, handed down by their elders and priests, as this. They were anxiously watching for his coming; for they had been sorely oppressed by the Burmans for ages, being regarded by them as a race of slaves. On account of this oppression, they

had been forced to flee from the plains into the mountains, and to take refuge in their fastnesses. Yet even here the un pitying emissaries of the Burman king, with their armed followers, would often search them out; and take all they had, beating and ill treating them even to torture; and, worst of all, would often carry away the fairest of their children to become slaves of the king and of his officers at his court in Hotalay.

There had existed from ancient days a class among the elders of this people, called prophets, who had encouraged and comforted them in their afflictions with the promises of a coming Deliverer.

We have noticed some of the traditions concerning Yuah; how the Karens once knew and enjoyed fellowship with him, but had lost this through sin.

These prophets also said, that their people were once great, and had a king of their own; that they once had a "white book," given them by Yuah; that through neglect to read and care for it, they had lost it, just as they had lost Yuah's fellowship; and for this reason they were ignorant and afflicted.

These prophets not only foretold the coming of

the Deliverer, but described him, and the manner of his coming. He was to be a "White Foreigner," and was to come from the "west," with "white wings," and bring the "White Book."

"When he comes," said their prophets, "the Karens will be restored to prosperity. They will regain their lost kingdom, and their king will also be restored to them, and they will become a people with a name, having honour among men, as in ancient days."

These traditions had been eagerly rehearsed among the people on all festival occasions, and also in their trials, thus creating expectancy of deliverance in the minds of many. They inspired the hope which sustained them in their trials.

No one has yet discovered the origin of these traditions. But they served the purpose of preparing a people to receive the messengers of the "glad tidings," who had now arrived in the country.

So it came to pass that when Shway Dee heard that this new teacher, heralding a living and loving God, had come from the west in a boat with white sails, he at once jumped to the conclusion that the great Deliverer, foretold by their

prophets, had arrived. And the rapidly spreading news caused such excitement throughout the country, and such recounting of traditions concerning Yuah, the coming of the Deliverer, and the future prosperity of the Karen nation, as had not been known for generations.

Even their blood feuds were forgotten for once in the excitement of this new topic. It was much as in the time of good old Simeon and Anna, when our Lord was brought to the temple. Good and devout people had been expecting a Deliverer for a long time. They had been talking about him, and wondering when he would come. In like manner had it been with these wild Karens. And now that the report of his arrival had gone forth, it produced just such an effect among this expectant people, as the announcement of the advent of the Messiah did nearly nineteen hundred years ago among the suffering Jews.

Of course, there were impromptu gatherings about their council fires, all over the jungles, to discuss the startling news. And Soo Thah's people were no exception to the rule. After Shway Dee's return, on that very evening, all the elders gathered about a bonfire just out of the village (for it was cold) to talk over the matter.

He was obliged to recount each particular again and again to the eager questioners.

Then they fell to discussing Yuah and his nature; some recounting his attributes, and others reciting in a sing song tone the sayings concerning him. What a scene for a painter!

"Yes," said an old man, reciting:

"Yuah is unchangeable, eternal;
He was in the beginning of the world.
Yuah is endless and eternal;
He existed in the beginning of the world.
The life of Yuah is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure his existence.
Yuah is perfect in every meritorious attribute;
He dies not in a succession of worlds."

He ceased his chant, when another followed him:

"The omnipotent is Yuah;
Him have we not believed.
Yuah is omniscient;
He created man anciently.
He has a perfect knowledge of all things.
Yuah created man in the beginning;
He knows all things to the present time."

It is quite impossible to describe the solemn and reverential manner in which these white

haired elders recited these attributes of Yuah, and with what awed attention the children listened. Their play had ceased, and they were drawn as by a magnet to this council of the elders. For a while there was silence, save the crackling of the bamboo and brush in the fire. And then the old prophet of the village, who had remained silently contemplating the fire, with his hand shielding his face, arose and extended his hands, as if in a benediction, and said:

“O children and grandchildren, formerly Yuah loved the Karen nation above all others; but they transgressed his commands, and in consequence of their transgression we suffer as at present. Because Yuah cursed us, we are in our present afflicted state, and have no books.” Then a great hope seemed to light up his face as, looking towards the stars, shining so brightly over his head, he exclaimed: “But Yuah will again have mercy upon us, and again he will love us above others. Yuah will save us again. It is on account of our listening to the language of Mukaw-lee (Satan), that we suffer.”

Then followed, sometimes in impassioned recitation in the lyrical verse of his ancestors, or in glowing discourse, the sayings of the ancients

regarding his race. The old man seemed to kindle with inspiration in the themes so dear to this wild people, as his discourse proceeded, till he spoke with a native eloquence which can be felt, but not described.

In his discourse he told how Yuah created the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon and stars; then man and woman; how, when he had made them, he said, "I will give them my great life;" how he created food for man and beast, and finally prepared a garden for the man and woman, whom he called Tha-nai and Ee-u.

Pausing here, as if reluctant to recount the ruin of his race, he gazed sadly about him in silence. The fire was burning low. An owl in the dark forest beyond uttered his lonely call, and several of the company started up, looking in the direction of the call; for to them it was the cry of a nat, asking, "Who? Who?"

Again the old man took up his discourse, and, passing rapidly into recitation, he gave the sad story of the temptation and fall of the race.

X

TEMPTATION AND FALL

WHEN Yuah had made Tha-nai and Ee-u, he placed them in a garden, and gave them commandment, saying, "In the garden I have made for you seven different kinds of trees, bearing seven different kinds of fruit. Among the seven, one tree is not good to eat. Eat not its fruit. If you eat, you will become old, you will sicken, you will die. Eat not. All I have created, I give you. Eat and drink with care. Once in seven days I will visit you. All I have commanded you observe and do. Forget me not. Pray to me every morning and evening."

Tha-nai and Ee-u had ten children, and one hundred granchildren. Every seven days, when the Lord Yuah visited them, the man and woman called their children together to sing praises to him.

After a time Mu-kaw-lee came to the man and woman and said, "Why are you here?"

"Our Father put us here," they replied.

"What do you eat here?" asked Mu-kaw-lee.

"Our Lord Yuah has created food for us, food without limit."

"Show me your food," said Mu-kaw-lee.

Then they went, Mu-kaw-lee following, to show him their fruit trees. Arriving at the garden, they pointed them out, saying, "This one is astringent, this sweet, this sour, this bitter, this savoury, this fiery; but this tree, we know not whether it is sour or sweet. Our Father, the Lord Yuah, said to us, 'Eat not the fruit of this tree. If you eat, you will die.' We eat not, and do not know whether it is sweet or sour."

Then Mu-kaw-lee replied, "It is not so, O my children. The heart of your Father Yuah is not with you. This is the richest and sweetest; it is richer and sweeter than the others. If you eat it, you will possess miraculous powers. You will be able to ascend to heaven, or to descend into the earth. You will be able to fly. Your Lord Yuah's heart is not with you. My heart is not like your Lord Yuah's heart. He is not honest. He is envious. I have not an envious heart. I love you, and I tell you the truth, and conceal nothing. If you do not believe me, do not eat

the fruit. If you will each eat the fruit as a trial, then you will know all."

Then Tha-nai spoke and said, "Our Father, the Lord Yuah, commanded us thus: 'Eat not the fruit of this tree.' We will not eat it." Speaking thus, he arose and walked away. The woman, however, listened to the words of Mu-kaw-lee. What he had said pleased her, and so she lingered. Mu-kaw-lee then enticed her for some time to eat, till she asked:

"Can we really fly, if we eat the fruit?"

"My daughter," replied Mu-kaw-lee, "I persuade you because I love you."

The woman then reached forth her hand, and took of the fruit and ate it; whereupon Mu-kaw-lee said, laughing, "My daughter, you have listened to me. Well, now go, give of the fruit to your husband, and say to him, 'I have eaten the fruit; it is very delicious.' If he does not eat, persuade him till he does eat; for you have eaten, and if you die, you die alone. If you have miraculous powers, you have them alone."

Heeding Mu-kaw-lee, the woman went and persuaded her husband, till she had won him over to her mind. Then he took the fruit from her hand, and ate it.

Thereupon the woman returned to Mu-kaw-lee and said, "My husband has eaten the fruit."

Hearing this, he laughed exceedingly, and said, "Now, O conquered man and woman, you have listened to my voice and obeyed me."

The next morning Yuah came to visit them; but they did not follow him with the singing of praises as usual. He drew near to them and said,

"Why have you eaten of the fruit of the tree, that I commanded you not to eat?"

They dared not reply even a word. Then Yuah cursed them, saying, "You have not obeyed my commands. The fruit that is not good to eat, I told you not to eat. You have not obeyed, and you have eaten. Therefore you shall grow old, you shall become sick, and you shall die."

The old man ceased, and a deep silence fell upon the party, till some young men arose and threw several armfuls of split bamboo upon the fire. Then one spoke and said, "Grandfather, tell us how nat-worship took the place of the worship of Yuah."

Again the prophet took up his recitation, which ran as follows:

When Yuah had cursed man, he left him to return no more. In course of time sickness began

to appear. One of the children of Tha-nai and Ee-u fell ill. Then they said one to the other, "We obeyed not Yuah's command, 'Of the fruit of the tree eat not,' but we ate. Now what shall we do? Yuah has cast us off. We cannot tell what to do. We must go and ask Mu-kaw-lee."

So they arose and went to him, and said, "O Mu-kaw-lee, Yuah commanded us, 'Eat not of the fruit.' But you advised us to eat, and we obeyed your words, and ate. Now our child is ill. What do you say? What will you advise?"

Mu-kaw-lee replied, "You did not obey your Father, the Lord Yuah. You listened to me. Now that you have obeyed me once, obey me to the end."

Then the old prophet related, still continuing in the ancient verse of his people, how Mu-kaw-lee instructed them in the principal offerings to be made in the various kinds of sickness, which would come upon them. These offerings were to be made to his servants, the nats, or demons, who presided over certain diseases, as well as accidents.

He also told how Mu-kaw-lee instructed them to divine by the bones of the fowl, which be-

came to these Hillmen the guide of almost every act of life.

Finally, the old man ceased his recitations, and the company gradually broke up.

Not only did this news of a Deliverer, now at hand, spread through the hills and clan of Shway Dee and Soo Thah, but among other clans far and near. The excitement grew day by day, fed now and then by the reports of those who were able to reach the wonderful "White Teacher" in the city of the Burmans.

The old men, who could recite the ancient traditions of the race, were never so popular as now.

Among the many traditions now sung or recited, was one which came to be a triumphal song, and was sung at every meeting around their camp fires. Soo Thah's father called it the Karen's

SONG OF HOPE

"At the appointed season Yuah will come;
The dead trees will blossom and flower.
When the appointed season comes, Yuah will arrive;
The mouldering trees will blossom and bloom again.
Yuah will come and bring the great Thau-thee.
We must worship, both great and small,
The great Thau-thee, Yuah created.
Let us ascend and worship."

Among the many promises handed down by the ancients, and now given new colouring and life by the reports of Shway Dee, were the following:

“O children and grandchildren, the Karens will yet dwell in a city, with a golden palace. The Karen king will yet appear, and when he arrives, there will be happiness.”

Sometimes their songs took a wider outlook, and seem almost prophetic of the triumph of the King of Righteousness, when all nations shall come under his benign sway; as, for example, this:

“Good persons, the good,
Shall go to the silver city, the silver town.
Righteous persons, the righteous,
Shall go to the new town, the new city.
Persons who believe their father and mother,
Shall enjoy the golden palace.
When the Karen king arrives,
There will be only one monarch.
When the Karen king comes,
There will be neither rich nor poor.”

For these happy days the Karens had now been watching and praying through many years of oppression and suffering; and now the day of their deliverance was truly at hand.

We can have no better closing for this chapter of our story, than the solemn prayer, which had often been uttered by the more devout Karens for years, and was about to be answered.

“O Lord, we have had affliction for a long succession of generations. Have compassion, have mercy upon us, O Lord. The Taling kings have had their season; the Burman kings have had their season; the Siamese kings have had their day; and the foreign kings, all have had their time. The Karen nation remains. Let our king arrive, O Lord. Now, O Lord, whom we adore, to whom we sing praises, let us dwell within the great town, the high city, the golden palace. Give to us; have compassion upon us, O Lord.”

XI

SMALL BEGINNINGS

THERE was no one who listened to these legends, songs and traditions with greater interest than Soo Thah. His past life and active mind had prepared him, though yet young, to appreciate the hope of rest which his people held. He well remembered the months of anxiety and dread connected with the blood feuds. He also recalled, too well, the stories of the visits made by the minions of the Burman king, when the village was stripped of what little the people had gathered by their industry. Every year in early times, his clan had been obliged to travel several days' journey to find a fragrant orchid, which they must take to Hotalay to the king as a tax.

Hope now found a rich soil in which to grow among these oppressed Hillmen, and it was ready to blossom and bear fruit. One however would be quite mistaken should he conclude, from what

has been said, that Soo Thah with all the Karens were ready to embrace the gospel of Jesus. This was by no means the case. As yet they knew nothing and cared less about the spiritual mission of the Deliverer. They longed only for a deliverance from temporal bondage and suffering. They had no more hunger for spiritual deliverance, than had the Jews, when Jesus came to them. Karen human nature is precisely like that of any other race. Yet God was preparing many people among them for Himself.

Some time after Shway Dee's visit to the city for salt, a report spread among Soo Thah's people, that Teacher Hope was coming to the hills to visit them. He was a Karen from a distant part of the country, and report said, that he had lived with the white teachers, till he had become skillful in reading the white book.

Great preparations were made for receiving him. In due time he appeared with a few followers. He travelled from village to village, proclaiming a Deliverer; yet not the white foreigner in the city, as all the Hillmen expected, but one Jesu Kree, the Son of Yuah.

His first meeting with them was held in the Blaw, or public room in Soo Thah's village.

Teacher Hope there explained his mission to the entire village, assembled to hear him.

"The Deliverer," said he, "about whom our fathers have sung, and for whom we have waited so long, has indeed come. He is the Son of Yuah. He has come to tell us of our Father Yuah."

"But," exclaimed one in the audience, "Yuah is angry with us. He will have nothing to do with us. All our prophets say this."

"But do not our traditions say, that Yuah, our King, will come again?" asked the teacher. "Yuah has never turned away from us. That is false. Mu-kaw-lee is a liar. It was he who deceived our ancestors, and made them believe a lie. We have turned away from Yuah, not he from us. So now he has sent his Son because he loves us."

"Is it the white foreigner in the city?" interrupted another.

"No, no," replied the teacher. "The white teacher is the messenger of Yuah's Son."

"But we are sinners," interrupted a third, "we kept not the sayings of Yuah; so we sicken and die."

"True," replied he, "but now the white

teacher tells us how Yuah has laid all our sins on his Son, and that he has suffered for them in our stead." Then, in the expressive Karen idiom, the teacher called aloud, "Whosoever will be in the Son of Yuah shall be restored to Yuah's favour and be called his son. The messenger in the city and this white book so declare." At this point he lifted the wonderful book of the Karen traditions on high, and all the audience bowed, as in worship.

The effect was electrical. Still mistaking the nature of the Deliverer, and persistently regarding him as a temporal king, like the Jews of old, they were ready for any extreme measure. If a leader had appeared, these simple minded people would have rallied about him by thousands, armed, and ready to make war upon their oppressors, the Burmans. In fact, if they had received any encouragement, they would have seized Teacher Hope, and made him their king.

Crowds followed him from village to village, listening to his words. They pressed about him to see the book. "Yes, it is truly the white book of our tradition," said they.

The excitement grew as the news spread, and it was not long before the hills and valleys, wher-



SAU-QUALA OR TEACHER HOPE.



A NATIVE HUNTER.

ever the Karens were found, were all aflame with the hope of a better life.

The teacher was besieged with questions, as to how one could "be in Jesu Kree;" for this had been his announcement at their first meeting, as the condition of securing Yuah's love. When he explained it, as before, adding baptism as a token of such a relation to him, multitudes applied for this rite. One of the first to present himself for this ordinance was Soo Thah's father, and some fourteen others. These being among the most intelligent in the village, and influential in the triennial feast, before described, Teacher Hope judged them worthy, and received them on probation till the white teacher, who was expected to visit the hills soon, should arrive.

While so many were enthusiastic over the first news of a Deliverer, the zeal of some cooled, when the conditions of discipleship were announced. Said they, "We can accept the Son of Yuah for our King; we can keep the Sabbath, and cease robbing and making raids on our enemies; we always speak the truth, and can even give up our strong drink; but who can love their enemies, and do good to those who do only evil?" And they were offended.

Yet so strong was their faith in a coming King, together with temporal good, that they clung to the new teachers, even while their teachings displeased them.

Soo Thah was an attentive observer of all these stirring events, and his own heart was powerfully moved by "the golden teachings" of Teacher Hope; though he said very little about it.

The people soon learned that the white book "talked," as they expressed it; for the teacher read to them from it. It was wonderful, and he was a marvel of learning in their sight. Soo Thah was once allowed to take the book in his hands, but he could make nothing of it, until one of the followers of the teacher explained to him the secret of the letters. Not long after he was able to trace out a verse in the book; and as its meaning flashed upon him, he came nearer showing his excitement than ever before. That night he lay awake a long time, thinking of the new and wonderful world into which he had obtained a peep that day. Such an overpowering desire had he to learn to read the white book, all for himself! Yes, to own one! But he must not think of it. This was too great happiness for him. Yet he could think of nothing else until

he fell asleep and lived it all over again in his dreams.

Soo Thah had not yet been moved spiritually. He had no sense of sin, no desire for Yuah, no love for him. He was moved intensely by a worldly ambition. He wanted knowledge and power. True, he hungered after "soul food," but he had no clear idea what this was.

During the week the teacher organized a school, in which every boy in the village was enrolled. We say every boy, for girls were regarded quite out of the question in such matters. They were not allowed to attend the solemn feasts, as has been noticed. In fact, they were held as mere property to be bought and sold, when any young man desired one for a wife.

Soo Thah quickly learned to read. As there were no books for this first school, they sought out a large teak tree, from which they made wooden slates, and used charcoal for writing. On these the alphabet was written by the assistants of Teacher Hope; and thus the school was ready to begin its work.

Besides the white book, which was used as the text book in the school, the teacher had a small book of hymns, with "the most beautiful tunes

ever heard," Soo Thah said. And he should know, for was he not one of the most noted singers of the Karen traditions among all the young people of the country?

The school room is worthy of notice. It was customary for the people to have a large room in their villages for the assembly of the elders, and for strangers. In these were the first assemblies for Christian worship; and here also was this first school. By the advice of their new teacher, however, the elders appointed a day when the whole village should join in erecting a building for a school house and chapel. This building was to be larger than any house in the village, and located on rising ground just outside of it. There was great enthusiasm displayed in this matter. It was entertaining to watch the workers: some bringing the long, symmetrical bamboo trees, large and small; others cutting, splitting and fitting them; others making rattan strings; and still others digging holes in the ground for the posts; while the half naked children were over everything and in everybody's way. In two days the building was ready for its roof of woven grass, which the women had meantime been preparing; and soon the building was

completed. The next Sabbath it was dedicated, Teacher Hope preaching, and also conducting a school session. There were no seats for the boys, nor did they require any; as, according to the custom of the country, they sat on the bamboo floor.

It has been said that there were no girls in this first school; yet they were keen observers of all that was transpiring. Among them was one named Wee-tha-soo, or Miss Patience, who was two years younger than Soo Thah,—a sprightly Miss with bright black eyes, and a sparkle of mischief in them. She was specially interested; so much so that she was rebuked by one of the elders for pressing forward to see the white book, when this was first shown. And she often got into trouble through her curiosity; or better, perhaps, through her peculiarly inquiring disposition. She was often seen about the school house whenever the school was in session; and after a while she was allowed to sit at the head of the ladder in the door way. It was also noticed after the school closed, that Soo Thah's head was very near hers, bowed over his wooden slate, busy with the characters on it. Then in a surprisingly short time, behold a wonder! A Karen girl, and the

first one in the history of the race, could read quite as well as the best of the boys! As for the hymns, she had learned them all, and taught them to several of her companions.

XII

A MEMORABLE VISIT

THE last chapter gave some account of the beginning of a movement among this wild people, which was to result in the birth of a nation. Throughout Burma the Karens caught the spirit of this action, begun in Soo Thah's village. And ever since men have declared that the uprising has been wonderful: that it is almost like "a nation being born in a day."

In course of time the report spread, that the white foreigners were really coming to the hills to visit the Karens, and that they would arrive first at Soo Thah's village. The messenger who announced the visit urged the people to cut out the jungle paths for the party. And yet urging was not needed, for all the young men were eager to do this. And such paths through the jungle had not been seen for a generation. They were cut wide, and even swept clean of leaves and twigs, making a royal road for the heralds of the Deliverer.

The long looked for day at last arrived. Messengers came to the village saying, that the party were on the way. A company of young men went out to meet them. All the villagers dressed themselves in their holiday attire and looked very gay in their bright coloured turbans and tunics. Several boys climbed into trees along the path over which the party would come, to see and announce their approach. Ah, what an exciting day! How different the visit from that of the messengers of the hated king! Joyful expectation sat on every countenance, and a suppressed excitement possessed the multitude. "Here they come!" shouted a lad from a tree top, and then scrambled down as fast as his nimble hands and feet would bring him.

The sound of beaten tom toms and the blowing of horns burst upon the ears of the expectant watchers, and set all the children wild. Soon, however, this discordant noise ceased in deference to the wish of the white teachers. It was a fine sight to watch the long line of men, led by the young men of the village, as they filed along through the woods, now around a hill top, and then out of sight in some deep ravine, as they drew towards the village.

Soo Thah had remained with several companions to put the finishing touches to the preparations for their expected guests. They had built a large booth of bamboos, grass and mats, the floor being about six feet from the ground. In it they had placed a table of bamboo, also bedsteads of the same, and jars of cool water along the wall. Outside and near by, a bath house and a cook house had been made. Near the cook house were large bamboo buckets of water, leaning against a rail, where the cook could easily reach them, and also an abundance of prepared fuel. The jungle had been cleared away in a wide circle all around the booths, and the ground swept clean of leaves and twigs. A large bunch of bamboos, with their feathery tops, formed a grateful shade in front of the larger booth; making at the same time a beautiful place for the assembling of the people.

Soo Thah and his friends, having completed all their preparations, and hearing the shout of the lad in the tree top, had gathered with the rest to witness the advent of the strangers. Wee-tha-soo was also there, her eyes sparkling with excitement; though many of her companions looked frightened, and were inclined to run, espe-

cially when the strange looking foreigners drew near. Just before entering the village, there was a clear mountain stream crossing the path, and unbridged. The white teachers had dismounted and were walking. When the "white mamma," as the Karens called her, reached this brook, she hesitated, wondering how she was to cross it; when Shway Dee quickly stepped forward, caught her up in his arms, and carefully placed her on the other side. He was not afraid of wetting his feet, as none of his people wore shoes. The dignified little "mamma" was greatly startled at this unlooked for gallantry on the part of Shway Dee, but as all the people approved the act, she made the best of it.

They now enter the village. What strange people these white foreigners are! Every look said it. So pale! The man so tall! Those horrid red hairs all over his face! He should pull them out, as the Karens did. What strange blue eyes! They had never seen the like before. And that great thing on his head! For what was that? (It was only a sun-hat, called a topee.) But that little white mamma at his side, no taller than some of the Karen girls, drew all eyes with her sweet smile. She looked so sweet and kind, that

Wee-tha-soo, before realizing what she was doing, found herself at her side. It was mutual love at first sight; for the white mamma had singled her out from all the crowd, and by some mutual and subtle sympathy no one can define, they were drawn together; she from the far away north, and this little brown girl of the south.

Several of the children ran screaming to their mothers, when they saw that terrible red-whiskered, blue-eyed stranger marching into the village at the head of the caravan; but they were soon quieted. And as for the barking dogs,—they must have thought a shower of stones had struck them, so many were fired at them by the boys to quiet their barking.

The caravan halted in front of the booths, and the bearers put down their baskets; the beds were unrolled on the mats provided by Soo Thah, and the ponies were unsaddled and tied to bamboo bunches to feed on their leaves. Camp chairs were unfolded under the shade in front of the booths, and the weary foreigners sat down to rest, while the cook flew around to prepare them a cup of tea.

Teacher Hope had also returned with the party, and acted as interpreter. All the village people

speedily gathered in a circle about the visitors. A brisk conversation began between the elders and the white teacher. Special surprise and pleasure were shown when the white teacher spoke a few words to Soo Thah's father in their own language. "Why, he speaks our language!" exclaimed one after another in great glee.

Meanwhile the tired "mamma" was doing her best to look happy, and she succeeded so well, that Wee-tha-soo and several other girls had crept near and sat quietly down on the ground near her, quite content to look upon her, who was to them like an angel from heaven. The little woman, however, was having a sorry time of it; for she was very tired with the long journey and hard climb up the mountain side, and must now sit and be gazed upon in silence. And then one gets weary after a while, trying to keep a happy face, when the heart is sad. Besides she had recently parted from her father and mother, and other dear friends in the home land. She had taken her life in her hands and come to these ends of the earth for love's sake. Here she sat in the midst of all this wildness, poverty, and ignorance, unable to understand or speak a word. How

could she banish a feeling of helplessness and loneliness?

Her husband was busy in his conversation with the elders. The women and girls, taking courage from the mamma's sweet smiles and quiet ways, had yielded to their overpowering curiosity, and had gathered about her closer and closer, like a swarm of bees about a cup of honey. Soon one ventured to touch the hem of her wonderful dress. She was being looked over with true feminine curiosity, which was devouring them. Why were her hands brown [gloved], when her face was so white? And of all things, why should these strange foreigners, with their white faces, have black feet?—for these simple folk knew nothing about shoes and stockings.

From feeling of her dress, they grew so familiar as to forget all fear, and were only intent on discovery. Under this scrutiny the patient woman bore up with becoming heroism, until her weary nerves could endure no more, and she hastily arose and retired to the booth, where her bed was spread, and there surrendered herself to tears. But the floor of the booth and its walls did not quite meet, and as she drew her handker-

chief from her pocket, what should her astonished eyes meet but a dozen pairs of eyes, looking through the crack between the floor and walls, carefully noting every movement she made. The strong heart of the weary woman came to her aid and, brushing away her tears, she burst into a hearty laugh, which was echoed by her audience.

The week spent in the village was a busy one, and, as they became acquainted with the people, it grew to be a very happy one. The story of Jehovah's love for them, in his Son, was a subject of which the new converts could not weary; nor, in fact, did any of the villagers lose their interest in the new theme.

It was strange that Soo Thah did not follow his father and friends in asking baptism. Was there rebellion in his heart, of which he was unconscious? Be this as it may, he did not join some of his companions in seeking to be identified with the followers of the Deliverer. Among those who did was Wee-tha-soo. On the following Sabbath twenty-three were baptized, five of whom were women and girls. These were the first fruits of a great harvest.

XIII

TWO NOTABLE EVENTS

THE following Sabbath, fixed for the baptism, was a charming day. The bright sunshine sparkling and dancing on many a glossy leaf of palm and banyan, as they fluttered in the cool breeze; the deep hum of the honey bees, passing to and fro in their flight between their nests under the limbs of the great oil trees and the flowering creepers on the mountain side, the reverent demeanour of the people, though aroused to eager expectancy,—all conspired to make the day a marked one in the experience of those concerned. Even the most ignorant were deeply impressed by the unusual and solemn services.

The news of the proposed baptism had spread among the villages, and a multitude came to witness this ceremony of “entering the new religion.” Scores of savages, with weapons in their hands, were seen running from all quarters towards the place of baptism. This was a deep pool

in a clear mountain stream, arched with willows in which were hanging bright flowering orchids.

Soo Thah had been asked by the white teacher to carry the mamma's chair. In various ways he had made himself useful, and thus became identified with the new worship. Teacher Hope having been ordained some months previous, was to perform the rite of baptism for the first time.

When the vast multitude had gathered on both banks of the brook, and on the sloping sides of the hills, Teacher Hope explained the ordinance he was about to administer, and announced again the advent of the Deliverer to his attentive and reverent listeners; many of whom heard the "glad tidings" for the first time. A hymn was then sung, led by Soo Thah and Wee-tha-soo. Teacher Hope, standing in the pool of water, offered a brief prayer, the candidates meanwhile standing on the grassy bank. Then as each one rose from the watery grave, where he had been "buried with Christ," the singers sang one of the verses of

"O happy day, that fixed my choice,"

which had been translated into the Karen language for the occasion. "Buried with Christ—

raised to newness of life." So Teacher Hope had explained the symbol. And they understood now what it meant "to be in Christ;" the rite itself serving to illustrate the great truth. The stillness that had pervaded the service was almost painful. Who could portray the intense interest written on the faces of those ignorant people, or the joy of those who had believed?

This occasion proved an object lesson of great influence, the report of which spread far and wide. Invitations now poured in upon the teachers to visit villages all over the hills; assuring them that large numbers were anxious for instruction and baptism, that they might enter the new religion.

In the afternoon of the same day the first church was organized, a pastor and two deacons chosen, one of the latter being Soo Thah's father, who was ever after styled "the one-eyed deacon."

It would not be just to dismiss this village without quoting the testimony regarding it, given by a visitor years after the events here recorded. Said he, "The change wrought here within a few years by the gospel is marvellous. Why, the very faces of the people have changed in their appearance. Hope, love and intelligence have

taken the places of doubt, hate and ignorance. Board houses have taken the place of bamboo. The houses and their surroundings, and the people themselves, are neater. Ignorance has fled, and intelligence has taken its place."

The school flourished from its beginning. The prejudice against the education of girls was soon swept away. Wee-tha-soo's case was too strong an argument for female education to be resisted. The white mamma too had, by Wee-tha-soo's help, taught a class of girls several hymns before she left, and they became a great assistance in all public worship.

Then further, sharp eyes had marked the honour in which the mamma was held by her husband, and the help she gave him in everything; so that the elders began to see possibilities for their daughters, of which they had never dreamed.

When it was announced that Wee-tha-soo had been invited by the white mamma to return with her to the city, for the study of the white book, she became the envy of all the girls in the village. So it came to pass, that most of them were enrolled in the school before the teachers returned to town.

We have now seen what followed the announce-

ment of the Deliverer in Soo Thah's village. Do not think, however, that these stirring events were confined to this locality. It was wonderful! All over Burma, in the mountains and on the plains, like scenes had been, or were being enacted. This nation of slaves were shaking off their shackles. Men of wide intelligence declared there had not been the like since ancient days. The printing presses could not provide books fast enough for the people's demands; and hundreds of young men and women were learning to read words written on board slates, as at first in Soo Thah's village. Great sacrifices were made by these young people to secure an education; some going several days' journey over the mountain ranges to find a teacher.

The teacher in Soo Thah's village could only instruct his pupils how to read. Every other branch of knowledge was Greek to him. You will understand when a people with no books suddenly turn to God and to the acquisition of knowledge, as had these Karens, it takes time to prepare teachers for them. So as soon as any one acquired a little knowledge, he was immediately caught up by some village that was waiting for a teacher. Now that Yuah had given

them again the white book, they seemed resolved not to make the mistake of their forefathers in losing it by neglect.

Soo Thah very soon mastered the mysteries of reading, as we have noted. About two days to the south there was another village, that was reported to have secured a wonderful teacher, who was able to teach not only reading, but also arithmetic, geography, and many other things. No sooner did Soo Thah hear this, than he resolved to seek out this school. Accordingly at the end of harvest, he tried to find some one to go with him; but as the way was off the usual line of travel, he did not succeed. The country was now fairly peaceable, and the blood feuds were at least asleep wherever the glad tidings had been proclaimed. Yet the proposed journey was perilous, for the forest was full of wild beasts, and there was at least one dangerous stream to cross. But Soo Thah's thirst for knowledge overcame any fears he might have had, so that he resolved to undertake the journey alone. His father was loth to have him do this, but as he could spend the night that would intervene in a friendly village, he finally consented.

With his father's approval, he packed his trav-

eking basket with food for the journey, and his extra clothes, putting in also the spelling book his teacher had given him, and "the book of the elders," and bravely set forth. He also took a spear for defence against wild beasts, and a large knife in a bag that hung from his shoulder.

After the rice harvest, it seldom rains in Burma until the next sowing time, or for six months. January and February form what is called the cold season; though it is much like summer in the temperate zones. They are the most delightful months of the year. The sunshine is brilliant, and morning and evening the forests are vocal with the call of birds and beasts. At midday, however, everything seems to have fallen asleep, so quiet is it. There is heard only the sighing of the breeze through the trees, or the hum of the great Indian bee, gathering its stores of honey in the tops of the flowering trees, or of the smaller kind, like our American bee, which "gathers food from every opening flower."

Soo Thah was a great lover of nature in all her forms, though he might not be able to explain why. That morning, as he tramped through the forests, now amid deep shade, and then over the hill tops, where the vast plain was unrolled before

him, his heart swelled with a new life. Who can say that some good spirit was not accompanying him, inspiring him with noble thoughts, and working in him new and holy aspirations? He had leisure now to recall and meditate on what the teachers had declared concerning the wonderful Yuah. The stirring events of the past year would naturally pass in review, as he trudged along. The visit of the strange white man and woman; their surprising gentleness and love; and, above all, the marvels of a future life which they had announced; the patient, if less complete, teachings of his Karen instructor, who had taught him to read, and the wonderful things he read to him from the white book; all would recur to him during his two days' journey.

In the course of the first day, he came out of the forest upon the highest mountain peak in his country. From thence his way led down the side of a lofty mountain range, and then over a lower range to the stream already mentioned. Being somewhat weary, for it was about four o'clock in the afternoon, he seated himself upon a high rock, where a cool breeze would refresh him. How grand the scene which here met his gaze! To the north and south the vast rice plain rolled

away as far as the eye could reach. Westward lay the great city, embosomed in its forest of palms; and beyond this was the range of mountains whose shadowy curtain shut out the sea, over which came the white winged ships from far distant lands. Several lakes glistened in the reflected sunlight, their sheen reminding him of that "lake of glass," of which his teacher had read in the white book. Here and there brown patches in the dark green mango forests, or in the lighter green of the rice fields, marked the sites of Burman villages. Not a cloud marred the deep blue of the sky. Looking eastward, his eyes dwelt on range after range of mountains, each receding into the distant haze, until the great watershed between the Sittang and Salwen rivers towered like a cloud on the distant horizon. The birds were beginning to wake from their midday nap. A sparrow hawk flashed by him in pursuit of a turtle dove, which took refuge in a thicket almost at his feet. Down the mountain side a flock of monkeys were calling to each other, while playing their pranks in the tree tops. Soo Thah sat contemplating all this bright and entertaining scene with a new look in his eyes. Of what was he thinking? We may not know; for

though he has told us of this journey, he failed to admit us into the sanctuary of his soul on that occasion.

Was he not on the verge of a solution of all his questionings, when watching his father's rice fields by night? Was not his soul, repressed by years of ignorance and superstition, now pluming its wings for a flight towards the sun? Or, in the expressive language of his own people, was not his "spirit about to bloom?"

It was no new thing for Soo Thah to pray. He had often prayed to the nats. And now, as he looked into the beautiful sky, and thought of Yuah as its Creator, and drank in the inspiration of the grand creation before him, he involuntarily bowed his head, and his first prayer rose to the great Yuah. Was He too great to bow his ear to the cry of this brown boy? No, no.

It is no sign of weakness to let the grand things of God's creation thus play their sweet melodies upon the strings of our hearts.

XIV

A NARROW ESCAPE

LIGHT was now drawing near, and Soo Thah well knew how suddenly the pall of darkness dropped upon these mountains after sunset, and that the dangerous beasts would then be abroad. So, leaping from the rock, he plunged again into the thick forest, and sped towards the village, where he had planned to spend the night. This was soon reached, and he was cordially welcomed. Karens are profuse with their hospitality to all comers. They say, "We will not turn away a dog; for we may sometime need his help."

Though this village had not seen a teacher of the new religion, they had heard of it. Indeed, who in these hills had not? As soon as they learned that Soo Thah had really seen the white foreigner, they were the more ready to welcome him to the best they had. And before he realized what he was doing, he had become a messenger of the "glad tidings." Being a pleasant speaker,

the whole village hung upon his lips till far into the night; when the elders bethought themselves of their guest's weariness, and broke up the assembly.

Mats had already been spread for their guest; and he took two cotton blankets from his basket, one to lie on, and the other for a covering, and with a bamboo joint for a pillow, he lay down to sleep.

By five o'clock the next morning, the whole village was astir. The women were busy pounding the husks from the rice and preparing it for the day's food. Some were feeding the squealing pigs under the house. The fowls were doing their best to keep up the general confusion by crowing and cackling. In fact, the cocks had been sounding their alarm at intervals ever since three o'clock. Soon the golden rays of the rising sun shot across the mountain ranges, gilding their peaks with splendour; and as the king of day mounted higher, his spears of light were darted into the dark, dank ravines to slay the rising malaria.

Rice was soon eaten, and Soo Thah, attended by a half dozen young men of the village, set out on his journey. These attendants escorted him

several miles, according to Karen custom with honoured guests, and then, giving him careful directions about the jungle paths, returned.

After advancing a few miles, a turn in the path brought him to the brow of that mountain range at the foot of which flowed the torrent stream he must cross. A thick fog, the density of which can be understood only by one who has travelled in this tropical land, filled the narrow valley. And now, under the effect of the sun's rays and the morning breeze, its white, glistening surface was heaving and surging like a storm-tossed sea. A few miles to the east the valley was crossed by a spur of the mountain, cleft only by a single gorge, through which the stream rushed. This barrier divided the valley, its lower part sinking hundreds of feet below the upper section. And now the great fog-river was pouring in a mighty, yet silent cataract over this rugged barrier, forming a novel and charming scene.

Soo Thah instinctively paused to gaze upon it. Yet he could not tarry long, for there were serious difficulties before him. Had there been some fairy boat to convey him across that fog-river, all would have been easy. But he must wade through its misty bottom, besides crossing the impetuous

and treacherous stream. So, using his spear as an Alpen stock, he plunged into the dense fog, and went slipping and sliding down the mountain side, the dripping grass and bushes soon drenching him; for in his downward rush he could not avoid disturbing these. Besides, this thick mist, which looked so bright under the sun's rays, no sooner enveloped him than the sun was obscured, and he soon found himself in a dim twilight. It was like a sudden eclipse of the sun. Within a half hour he arrived at the stream, the roar of which had reached him far up the mountain side. And now he was confronted by a task which might well appall a strong man.

The banks were bold and rocky. The rushing current here leaped over high rocks, forming beautiful cascades, and there it boiled and swirled around huge boulders. Seldom did it find a quiet place in which to rest. Sometimes it dashed through narrow clefts in great ledges, where its resistless flood seemed to have forced a passage. At no place was the stream fordable. And as there was no bridge, the only means of crossing it was by a raft. Formerly there had been a swinging bridge from a tall peepul tree to the opposite cliff. The great rattans of which it was

formed were still hanging in fragments on either shore; but long since the structure had fallen.

Our hero, reared in jungle life, was inured to danger; yet he looked at that mountain torrent with some misgiving. However, he set bravely at work to prepare for crossing. Leaning his basket and spear against a tree, he took his knife, and set out to seek a place where he might hope to push a raft across the stream. After patient search, he discovered a place which he thought would serve his purpose. Then he cut several large bamboos, the air-tight chambers of which make them very buoyant. These he fastened together securely with rattans, which he found growing near by. A strong pole being next secured, and his basket and spear having been lashed to the raft, he was ready for the venture. One precaution against accident, however, he had taken. This was to transfer his precious books from the basket to the bag which hung from his shoulder. Thus in case the raft should be lost and he saved, he would not lose these, which he prized above all his possessions.

Though the current was strong, Soo Thah hoped by vigorous pushing to force his raft across to the selected landing place, before reach-

ing the dangerous rapids below. He knew the current would sweep him down at a fearful rate, and so had selected his landing place accordingly.

Pushing boldly out, his frail raft was seized by the current, against which he began to struggle with all his might. In his calculations, he had failed to take into account the treacherous rocks in the bed of the stream. On these his pole repeatedly slipped, and he was swept past his landing place and down into the raging waters, where rocks, mingling with the mad current, presented a scene of peril and terror. Soo Thah's utmost efforts against these raging elements were futile. His raft was dashed against a huge boulder near the opposite shore, the sudden shock nearly sending him headlong into the seething torrent. For a moment his heart stood still, yet he retained his presence of mind. Much quicker than can be told, the raft swung, fortunately nearer the shore he was seeking, where, borne under by the resistless current, it tilted on its edge. In this awful crisis Soo Thah was saved as by miracle. For just at that point a tree, which had grown from a rift in the great rock-wall of the gorge, reached out a strong branch as a helping hand. Seizing this with a death grip, just as the raft was swept from

his support, he was given a chance of life. Was it a mere chance that this limb was within his reach at that moment? Or was it an ordering of divine Providence, intended to teach this brown boy a lesson of God's care so impressive that he would never forget it? Which of these, no true Christian can doubt.

But we have left our hero clinging to the branch. In this position he was by no means out of peril; for his weight bent the limb so much as to bring him into the swift current, which was contending for him as if loth to surrender its prey. Only one reared as he had been, or who had become almost as agile with hands and feet as the squirrels and monkeys of his native jungle, could have saved himself even now. But with his acquired skill in climbing, he reached the trunk of the tree, and then descended to the sheltering cliff. He had saved his life and books, though all else was lost.

Were this a fancy sketch, instead of being a true story, doubtless Soo Thah would here be represented as bowing his head and offering thanks to Yuah for saving his life. But he did no such thing. Just then he may not have so much as thought of Yuah in connection with his won-

derful escape. But the time soon came when spiritual vision was given him, and he saw all these things clearly.

It was now near noon. The sun's light and heat had quite dissipated the fog, and Soo Thah had its genial warmth to dry his clothes and cheer his heart. Before nightfall he reached his journey's end, where a cordial reception was given him by the young men of the school, as well as by the teacher, who was destined to become so helpful to him.

XV

PROGRESS

SOO THAH'S introduction to the school was a simple matter. All its appointments were like those of his own village school. The building, however, was much better, being made of teak timber. It was a larger and more prosperous village than his own, and the converts were more numerous; thus enabling them to provide better accommodations for the new faith and new instruction.

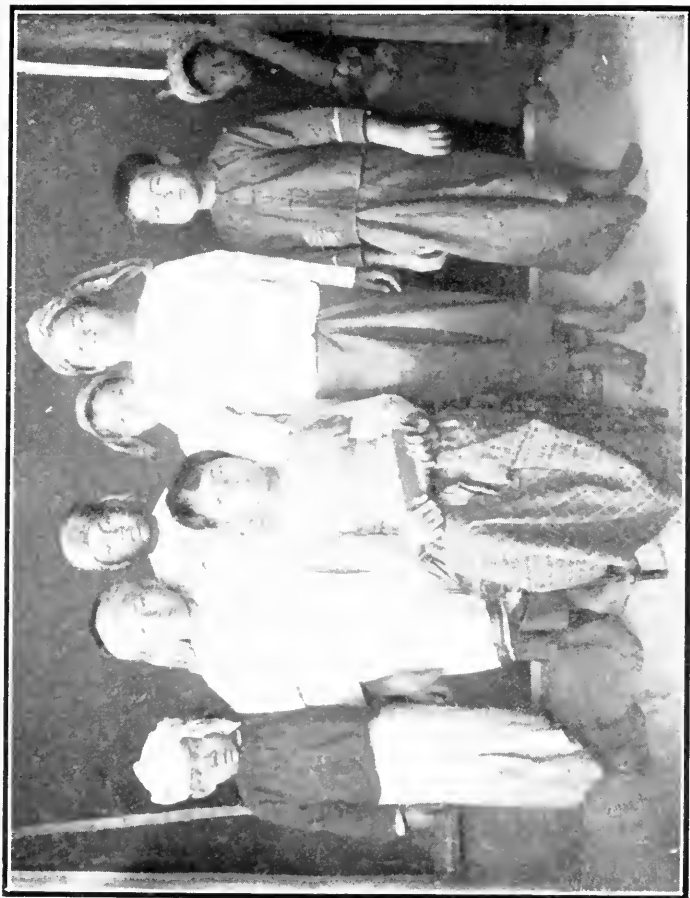
No dormitories were provided for the sixty boys attending the school. They slept on the floor of the school house. They also dined in the same building.

After Soo Thah had been in this school a few weeks, an event occurred which changed the course of his whole life. The school house had not as yet been supplied with doors. Yet the boys felt secure, and had doors been hung, they would probably have been left open, as it was seldom cold.

At night the scholars lay along the sides and back of the room. One night a man-eating tiger appeared in the village in search of food. This beast entered the school house and, strange to say, passed all the boys near the door, went to the farthest side, and there seizing a little fellow who laid next to Soo Thah, carried him off as a cat would a mouse. The poor boy gave one scream of terror and pain, which aroused the whole company. Some saw the savage beast as he sprang through the door; and though a great shouting and noise were made to frighten the tiger and cause him to drop the boy, the latter was never again seen.

This event was a terrible shock to the whole school. Recently a noted robber and murderer had been killed in a neighbouring village, and all believed that he had taken the form of a tiger, and was now seeking vengeance.

No one was more affected by this sad event than Soo Thah. Why did the tiger take his companion, and leave him? This question startled him. As he thought on the matter, the shadow of a near and terrible death haunted him; and he could not shake it off. Strange to say, that while he had not thought of Yuah in connection with



SCHOOL CHILDREN.

his escape from drowning, he now felt a divine power had preserved him. Yes, Yuah had been thinking of him, and had spared him for some good purpose. These thoughts awakened in him a sense of his great sin in rejecting the Deliverer, when his father, Wee-tha-soo and others had confessed him in baptism.

He now recalled how Teacher Hope had once said, "You are not blamed for not accepting Yuah's Son, when you do not know him. Your great sin is, that when you know that the Deliverer has come, you do not acknowledge him as your Master." This Soo Thah saw to be his own sin; and so great was his sense of sinfulness in the light of Yuah's care in saving him from the water and from the wild beast, that he would have quite lost heart, as he afterwards said, had it not been for a verse he had read in the Testament the previous night. [John 3:16.] When he read the verse, it impressed him as peculiar; for it set forth a love such as he had never dreamed, and he had paused in his reading to ponder it. Wonderful! Now it all came back to him in a new light,—this escape from death,—and his past life seemed small and mean.

Soo Thah was a lad of action. He had only

to see his duty to do it. He therefore at once and solemnly gave up himself and all he had to Yuah, and this for life. Having made this choice, he applied for baptism, and three Sabbaths after he and several of his companions formally "entered the new religion."

It may seem strange that Soo Thah did not exhibit more feeling in this crisis of his life, but we must remember the self-repressive character of most of these eastern races. His quiet acceptance of Christ as his personal Saviour was no sign of a lack of feeling. One of his companions, baptized with him, coming from a tribe more excitable by nature, showed quite a different experience. His reading book in the school was the New Testament. One day he said to his teacher:

"Teacher, I don't want to read this book any more. Please give me another."

"Why, Nya Pah, do you want to make the change? Is not this a good book?" was asked.

"Yes, but it makes me feel very badly. If it is true, I am a great sinner against Yuah."

"True, Nya Pah, but it shows a way of escape from sin. Read it another week, and see if you do not find that way," was the reply.

At the end of the week, his reading having been

directed by his teacher, he appeared in great agitation of mind, and said, "Teacher, I have found the way. I am so happy, and I want to be baptized; yet I greatly fear I cannot live as Christ teaches I ought to live. I am very weak. I get angry so quickly, I shall disgrace my Saviour. What must I do?"

The doctrine of the keeping power of Jesus was then opened to him, and he was urged to think and pray over the matter longer. After a few days he returned, his face beaming with light, and tears of joy in his eyes, exclaiming, "O teacher, I understand it all now. Jesus saves, and Jesus keeps me, I believe. I must follow him in baptism."

Soo Thah doubtless had a like experience, as his after life showed, though he gave little outward expression to his feelings.

We will now pass rapidly over the years of Soo Thah's school days. They were uneventful, marked only by hard work. Passing through the primary school, he entered the training school in the big town, where he came under the personal instruction of the white foreigner. And here he found young men like himself, who had come from all parts of the country for instruction.

Here also was a school for girls under the care of the white mamma, in which Wee-tha-soo had become a teacher. She had grown to be a fine young woman, with a sprightly, intelligent face. She was the special helper of the white mamma, and it was soon clear to Soo Thah, that she was greatly trusted and loved by her. Other white teachers also had arrived, and the Karen nation was rapidly advancing from darkness and ignorance to light and intelligence.

Several years were passed in this school, when Soo Thah was pronounced fitted to enter the Bible school in a distant city. He was a diligent student of the Book. Such was his faithfulness, that his teachers singled him out as one promising much usefulness; nor were they to be disappointed.

Though grown more thoughtful, our hero had not lost the vivacity of earlier days. He was the same rollicking boy he had always been, full of life, and fun, and manliness. In fact his manly qualities had been intensified by his new life. A solemn purpose had taken possession of him. He had something now for which to live and to work outside of himself; and it would be strange if this new purpose had not intensified his char-

acter. Many of his companions were wasting their lives because they had no definite aim, save that of personal gratification. Not so with Soo Thah. He had gone out of himself to live for the Deliverer. He had taken His great life for his own model. This was the fruit of his new faith.

We have seen what a revolution was wrought in Soo Thah's village by the advent of the glad tidings. This was a type, as has been intimated, of what was occurring wherever the Karens were found. Churches and schools were multiplying all over the land. It is impossible to describe the hunger of the young people for knowledge. Sacrifices were cheerfully made for its acquisition. Many, like Soo Thah, made long and perilous journeys in search of it. No parallel to this has been seen in modern times.

Of course, when the Burmans, who assumed to be the masters of this jungle people, saw their former slaves in such favour with the foreign teachers, they were filled with envy and wrath, and persecution raged on every side. Karen Christians were fined, beaten and imprisoned. Some even gave up their lives for their new faith. This however failed to check the earnestness of

this people in their quest of knowledge. Everywhere by torch-light by night, as well as by the light of day, might be found little companies puzzling over the strange characters of their new alphabet, or rehearsing what some of them had heard from the white teachers.

Moreover, in the course of time, the strong English government extended its protection over some of these Hillmen, when it took from the wicked Burman king the provinces of Lower, and later of Upper Burmah. This change gave them a Christian Empress, in place of a heathen King; and they easily adjusted their traditions to this changed condition. And as they henceforward found themselves under a government which protected, instead of destroyed them, a spirit of loyalty sprang up towards their new rulers, which the English speedily recognized; and ere long they were found fighting side by side with the trained soldiers of their emancipators for the supremacy of the British crown. Such in brief was the development of a jungle people from ignorance and savagery into intelligence and civilization.

XVI

SOO THAH'S MARRIAGE

AT the age of about twenty-three years, Soo Thah completed his course of studies, and was appointed a teacher in a distant, frontier village, between the country controlled by the English, and that of the independent tribes beyond.

In person he was as fine a specimen of the Hill-men as could be found. He was short in stature (like his race), symmetrical in build, large limbed, and graceful in all his movements. He had bright black eyes, long black hair, which he used to twist into the folds of a large silk handkerchief of bright colours, for a turban. The glossy black of his hair formed a pleasing contrast to the colours of the head-dress. His features were regular, and a singular look of intelligence lighted up his face in conversation.

His education had vastly improved him in all respects. One would have to go far to find a white boy who would excel him in thoughtful

politeness in his intercourse with others. Some Englishmen, who had met him, called him the "gentleman Karen."

His controlling purpose to serve his Saviour and Lord, whom he trusted and loved with a childlike faith, served to ennoble his countenance, and to impart dignity to his bearing. Said one of his teachers, "No one can know that young man very long without loving him."

This record of his life would be incomplete, did it not tell what has been intimated, that Wee-tha-soo had won his heart, almost from the time she stole a march on the elders, and learned the alphabet at the head of the school house ladder.

It was quite a tame affair, as such things go, and not at all romantic. But it corresponded with Karen life. They really seemed to have been made for each other, and accepted the situation as a matter of course. Yet there was doubtless as true love between the two as ever existed.

It was usual among heathen Karens to betroth their children when very young; sometimes in their infancy. At such times presents of some value were exchanged: the more valuable being given by the parents of the boy, as the girl must leave her parents, when married, and join the

family of her husband. The presents given by the boy's parents were really regarded as purchase money. This custom had been followed by the parents of Soo Thah and Wee-tha-soo. And when they grew up, it was regarded fortunate by their friends, that they were able, in love, to ratify the acts of their parents.

Wee-tha-soo had received a good education under the direction of the white mamma, having graduated with honour. She had not only a common school education, but had also acquired a good knowledge of the Bible, of sewing and weaving, and also of nursing the sick.

The wedding took place in the mission chapel of the city where the white teachers lived. The school children had trimmed the room with flowers, and palm and banana leaves. Fragrant orchids, hanging about the room, formed the principal decoration. At the appointed hour the chapel was packed with school children and other friends. Among the latter were a number of English people and the white teachers. Teacher Hope, now aged, sat at the table, waiting for the bride to appear. Soo Thah, neatly dressed, had already taken his seat with a companion. Presently there was a turning of heads, as the father

of Wee-tha-soo with his daughter, followed by several waiting girls, entered the chapel. At this moment some one struck up a wedding march on the small organ in the rear of the chapel. The bride wore a richly figured silk skirt, and black velvet tunic, trimmed with red, over a white jacket with lace at neck and wrists. Her glossy black hair, rich in its abundance, was ornamented with flowers, and in her hand was a beautiful bouquet.

All this was quite an innovation in Karen customs, being in reality an outcome of their new life. Had they still been heathen, a large company would have gathered and given themselves up to eating, drinking whiskey distilled from rice, and dancing. During this drunken feast, the groom and bride would have sat down and eaten together, this act forming the binding ceremony. The whole matter would have been a wild, discordant ceremony, and without form and beauty.

But the bridal party has reached the desk. Soo Thah has risen with his best man, and stands at the left hand of the bride, when the ceremony proceeds much as in Christian lands. The only difference is that the pastor takes more liberty and time in giving instruction and warning to the

wedded pair. The ceremony closes with a prayer, singing of a hymn and the benediction. The newly married couple then receive the congratulations of their friends, and after this retire to the place of feasting, where rice and curry is provided in abundance for all.

Since Soo Thah had accepted his appointment as a teacher, the friends of Wee-tha-soo, and in fact of both, were not a little anxious about their safety at the new post. The independent tribes, near which this village lay, were notoriously bad and savage. Only a year before, a village occupied by teacher Saw Aw, a friend of Soo Thah, had been attacked by them. Several had been killed, and Saw Aw's whole family, wife and two children, had been carried into captivity. He himself had barely escaped with his life. It was noticed that these savages had vented their spite particularly upon the Bible in the chapel, which they cut in pieces and scattered about the floor.

This was a terrible blow to Saw Aw, and also to all the disciples in that village. It was moreover a great test of their faith. Saw Aw stood the test nobly. He wavered not a jot in his submission to the divine will; but laboured on for this same people for twenty years, or until his death.

During this time he saw a great number of his tribe become loyal followers of the Deliverer. After living alone for many years, during which time he diligently, but in vain, sought to trace his wife and children, he was married again, and this to an educated convert of the tribe that had captured his former wife and children. And, as to Job of old, God gave him a family of beautiful children, all of whom joined the Christian band.

With this sad experience before them, the friends of Soo Thah and his bride were naturally anxious, lest a like fate should befall them. How many couples in civilized lands would have been willing to take their place?

Soo Thah's salary was to be about twenty-five or thirty dollars a year. Besides this, he would receive something from his people. They would build him a house, and give him his rice, when they had any. He had no fear about his daily food. As has been said, his faith was that of a little child.

As for Wee-tha-soo, though she looked sober in view of this horrible experience of a fellow teacher and his family, she simply replied to the pleadings of her friends, "The great Yuah calls my husband to serve him in that place of danger.

I will go with him. If he dies, I die. If he lives, I live." This settled the whole matter. To the entreaties of his friends, Soo Thah made a similar reply. The foundation of their devotion was "constraining love."

Guides came from the village which had called Soo Thah to be their pastor. Under their lead, he and his wife, attended by a few friends to see them on their way, began their journey eastward over the mountains. Their course led them through their native village, where they had planned to make a short visit. And here they found that a great revolution had taken place during the few years of their absence. The little church had grown, so as to include nearly all the inhabitants of the village. The building of bamboo had given place to one made of teak boards. The school also showed like improvement, and was taught by a graduate from the town training school. The pastor of the church, Hay Taw, was an old playmate of Soo Thah, and also a graduate of the town training school. Nor were these the only signs of progress Soo Thah noticed. The villagers had made for themselves much better houses than those of the old days; and had located them with some eye to

order. Fruit trees had been set out, and there were gardens of bananas also about the village. In short, the whole place had a more orderly and cleanly look than in its heathen days.

In expectation of Soo Thah and Wee-tha-soo's arrival, Hay Taw and the teacher of the school had prepared an exhibition for their entertainment, and in their honour. There had been no little excitement among the pupils while preparing for the event. On the appointed evening, all the villagers were assembled, and with them were visitors from neighbouring places. The custom of sitting on mats, spread over the floor, was still retained; though Soo Thah and a few elders sat upon raised seats. The people were so used to this, that they would have felt as awkward upon raised seats, as would we sitting on the floor.

It was a bright and cheerful sight to look on so many smiling and happy faces. Any one would have easily noted the great contrast, if they had seen them in their heathen days. All were clean and neatly dressed. The girls had their hair combed and decked with flowers. So did Wee-tha-soo, yet she well remembered how the older people in heathen days used to laugh at the girls

for doing this. And no girl would then dare repeat the offence, unless she was ready to endure the scorn of the elders, who counted all such things as evidences of pride, or something worse.

During the exercises the men sat on one side of the room, and the women on the other. A broad space was left at the end for the speakers and singers. To add to the attractions of the occasion, the room had been ornamented with leaves and flowers gathered in the forest. Then the teacher had prepared a written program, copies of which were distributed among the elders.

The exercises began with the singing of a hymn by the whole assembly. It was notable that most present had hymn books and could use them. Soo Thah was asked to lead in prayer. Then began the real exercises of the exhibition, which consisted of songs, recitations, essays and dialogues; the girls as well as boys taking part in them.

The days of woman's degradation among this people were passing away. The white book was working its blessed spell. Soo Thah watched the proceedings with peculiar feelings. How well he remembered the past,—the ignorance and degradation of his people, the worship of nats, the weird tales of Aunt Kaw Do, the traditions,

feasts, wars, oppressions and hardships from feuds, or the king's messengers. How great the contrast! His sense of gratitude to Him who had by his grace wrought all this was so great, he could with difficulty restrain the rush of his feelings. But the old habit, ingrained in his race, to repress feeling, came to his rescue.

How modestly the little girls took the platform and recited their pieces, either from the Bible or hymn book, as the range of Karen literature was still limited. How manly the little fellows looked, as they faced each other in dialogues. Ah, it was all a grand sight, which inspired the guests of the evening with new zeal for their work. They were looking forward by faith to just such fruit in their own labours.

The exercises of the children closed, and the one-eyed deacon, being the oldest man in the village, was asked to make the final address. He laid aside his silver-mounted sword, and the Karen bag always carried by the older men, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and awkwardly arose to his feet. You see, this new generation was sweeping rapidly past his own, and he felt left behind. Yet was he overjoyed in the progress of his children, as he called them all.

It did not take him long to get his balance, and there he stood, a grand old man with white hair, but with the fire of youth in his eyes. Who can report the speech of a Karen, such as he? No English translation can approach it. A brief description of old times compared with the present, an expression of joy in the blessings of the Deliverer, that had fallen upon them, hope for the future of his people, and an exhortation to the youth present, made up his address, at the close of which he pronounced the solemn blessing customary with the elders.

Then Soo Thah was asked to speak; and he responded in a few words, testifying his respect for his aged father, who had just spoken, and asking their prayers for himself and wife in their hazardous mission. The doxology was sung, and the exhibition closed.

XVII

SOO THAH BEGINS HIS LIFE WORK

THE next morning our party were early astir, had eaten their rice, packed their baskets, and were on their way eastward under an enthusiastic escort. The village of their destination was called Wee-la-kaw, or Lower City. Their course lay over the top of a mountain, and then across several ranges of mountains with their intervening valleys, through which streams were flowing. Wee-la-kaw nestled at the foot of the great water-shed range before mentioned.

Reaching the summit of the first mountain, where Soo Thah had often stood and noted the villages of the enemies of his people, he halted a moment to consider the scene before him. Memory was busy. What a change had been wrought in his life! Then it was with feelings of dread and hate, that he gazed on those enemies; but now he was on a mission of love to them. Such are the changes the Deliverer always works in men who heed his calls.

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The journey was uneventful to the minds of these travellers, though the reader would have found it exciting. Through what magnificent forests they passed, where the great clumps of bamboos looked like the fluted pillars of a grand cathedral, and, with their gracefully arched tops, formed lofty aisles, amid which the songs of birds resounded with sweet, organ tones. And what fine old trees towered above their heads, as they tramped along the narrow path, their tops interlaced with great flowering creepers, thus forming a beautiful canopy to shut out the sun's rays. How fragrant the air also, with the perfume of orchids and other flowers. It was pleasant to note with what alacrity the guides put down their loads, and climbed into the trees like monkeys to gather these orchids, when they found that Wee-tha-soo was fond of them. Once she would not have bestowed a second look upon them. And her people had always been curious to know why the white foreigners were so fond of flowers. "Were they good for medicine?" was their inquiry. But in Wee-tha-soo, as in all heathen who embrace Christianity, the new life had awakened a love for the beautiful along with other refinements.

Thus they pursued their way over mountains, through dales and along the rocky beds of singing brooks, now stooping to pass under drooping bamboos, or pushing their way through rank grass, until it was time to camp for the night. The place for this was chosen on the bank of a brook, under the shade of a large clump of bamboos. A booth was made for Wee-tha-soo, while the others camped down on the ground under the protection of overhanging foliage.

“ Now for a fire ! ” “ Where are the matches ? ” was the call. Forgotten ! Not a match in the whole party. And, strange to say, the guides had no flint and steel with them. In like circumstances many would have been obliged to pass the night without a fire ; but not these natives of the jungle. By a process of quick and hard rubbing, or friction, which must needs be seen by the uninitiated to be understood, fire was first started in fine scrapings from the outer surface of a dry bamboo, and with this smouldering dust, blown into flame, a larger fire was easily kindled.

This difficulty overcome, another arose. There were rice and vegetables in abundance, but no pots in which to cook them. Where civilized travellers would have been puzzled, these natives,

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trained to live by their wits, found no difficulty. Several of the party scattered to gather fuel, while others sought out the largest of the ever present bamboos. From these they cut several joints, leaving one end closed. In these the food was placed with some water, and then they were leaned over the fire so that the flame would strike the side of each bucket. The water together with the green wood kept the buckets from burning, and soon the food was deliciously cooked; for in these conditions, it takes the flavour of the bamboo buckets, which is very pleasant. Great leaves, as large as a platter, were chosen for their plates, while the mountain brook supplied them with the choicest drink. No time was required to wash dishes.

Supper over, Soo Thah read and explained a chapter in the New Testament. Then Wee-tha-soo joined with him in singing a translation of

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”

The sweet melody of this grand old hymn floated out through those dark forests, probably for the first time since “the morning stars sang together.” The guides, sitting about the fire, lis-

tened intently. And maybe, they too were beginning to see light from the throne of Yuah, streaming into their darkened souls.

Such a group around an evening camp-fire in India, once seen, can never be forgotten. Such worship brings heaven very near. The crackling fire, with its lights and shadows dancing among the overhanging green, the wild surroundings, the rude natives, the cultivated and graceful Karen girl, the strong face of the Karen teacher,—all formed a picture of great joy and hope. What a tribute to the power of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ our Lord!

Having completed their song, all bowed low upon the ground, the guides included, and a prayer, simple and hearty, was poured into the listening ear of the great Yuah. The doxology completed the simple service.

It has appeared how like children these Karens are. The hot supper, the happy song of praise, and the genial warmth of the fire stimulated them to sport. Soo Thah's guides now cut off a few joints of bambo and placed them on the fire. The heat so expanded the confined air, that the bamboos exploded with a loud report. Where many joints are thus exploded at once, the effect is like

volley firing. And no joke is more appreciated by the Karens, than to explode one of these joints behind an unsuspecting victim, sitting with his back to the fire. In such circumstances, there is often some high tumbling. Music! How much there is in a bamboo! These guides proved their skill in this matter also. Having procured a large joint, one end open, they placed a bundle of split bamboo strings half way down on the inside, and after pouring in a half pint of water, they stood this upright on the fire. When the water began to boil, the instrument began to sing, giving forth a deep, sonorous, organ note, which sounded as though it were a mile away, though at their very feet. By varying the position of the strings, the note is changed from high to low. When tired of this, they constructed a band of music of five or more pieces. It was indeed rude music, and yet not unpleasant.

These evening encampments are times of much pleasure and usefulness, if the company is not too weary. There is no time like this for asking and answering questions, if a teacher is present; and a vast amount of information is imparted.

Watchers for the night were now arranged, for tigers were about, so that fires must be kept burn-

ing all the night. Then the tired company fell asleep.

The party arrived safely at Wee-la-kaw on the evening of the next day; where the teacher and his wife took possession of the new house, which the villagers had made for them, and immediately they began their missionary work.

We must pass over an account of this work. Time will only permit us to give its results. In several years a thriving church was gathered, most of the villagers accepting the teachings of the Deliverer, as presented by their young pastor and his wife, and uniting with the church. They also succeeded in establishing a flourishing school, in which the boys and girls were instructed.

Among other reforms, they pushed that of temperance with a good degree of success, especially among the young people. Not only abstinence from the use of intoxicants was secured, but also from the use of betel-nut chewing, and of tobacco in all forms. One man, however, the richest, and so the most influential in the village, would not fall in with these new ideas. He persisted in distilling and drinking rice whiskey, greatly to the grief of the young pastor. All warnings and pleadings with him to give up

setting such an example, which was destroying young people, proved in vain. In these circumstances, Soo Thah found he was losing ground in his work. So he further laboured with this man, and in reasoning with him, told him what the white doctors said about the poison of alcohol. Finding him immovable, and at the same time despairing of further success in his work with such an obstacle in his way, he at last threatened to resign and to return to his own country, if the old man would not give up his practices.

This last appeal was not without effect. The man was really quite fond of the young pastor and his wife. He could not fail to see the great blessings their labours had conferred on his village. Besides, if they should leave, he greatly feared a raid would be made upon them at once by their enemies over the mountain. Accordingly he agreed to give up his whiskey.

The rice and corn, of which their whiskey is made, are first boiled, then mixed with yeast and set aside to ferment, after which the liquid is distilled by a rude process. The result is a strongly intoxicating drink. This old man wished to save what he had in process of fermentation, and so fed it all to his hogs. In the morning

there was an object lesson of startling character in his pig pen, which Soo Thah was not slow to use. The pigs were not only dead, but so swollen that one could scarcely see their legs. Then the old man proposed to save the pork ; but when he applied his knife to cut them up, they literally exploded, and the smell of whiskey proceeding from them was so vile, that the meat was quite useless. Even the dogs would not touch it.

That village, at least, became strongly temperance forthwith ; and not only so, but the story of the tragic death of the pigs spread far and wide among the Karens, greatly promoting this needed reform.

In course of time the health of both Soo Thah and his wife became so impaired, that he resigned, and took a pastorate among his own clan, much nearer home. Here also he won a large place in the hearts of those whom he served. He was not, however, at rest. The crowning usefulness of his life, for which all the past had been only a preparation, was drawing nigh.

XVIII

A NOTABLE ASSEMBLY

WE have now reached a stage in the story where it must be apparent that this little brown race was a chosen people both for receiving and promulgating the words of Yuah. Indeed, their missionary spirit was remarkable from their first reception of the gospel. It took the white race many generations to learn this primary lesson of the gospel of Jesus. The Karens at once accepted this lesson as a part of their duty in loyalty to Christ their Deliverer. It was with them, as with one of old, of whom it is said, "Philip findeth Nathaniel." For immediately upon accepting the Deliverer as their Master, they felt impelled to bring others to him. Nor did they take up the work as a mere duty. It was to them rather a joyous service of love. Happy all who are moved to like fidelity.

Up to this time about twenty thousand Karens in Burma had enrolled themselves under the banner of the cross. And they had often proved

the reality of their faith by the patient endurance of persecutions, even unto martyrdom. Besides they had made no small sacrifices to maintain schools, and to prosecute mission work among savage tribes in other provinces.

Soo Thah was by no means the only brave and self-denying man among them. He was rather a fair type of the stalwart Christian manhood that characterized these Hillmen from the first. In Soo Thah's own country other young men had with him carried the glad tidings to thousands scattered among eight or more tribes, and many hundreds had "entered the new religion."

An annual meeting of all these churches had been appointed to be held in a village near where Soo Thah was pastor. Several of the foreign teachers were expected to be present; for at this time many of these had come to Burma. And as the attendance at this annual meeting would be large, the neighbouring villages, by contributions of labour and food, helped in the entertainment of guests. Among the preparations for this meeting was the building of a tabernacle, capable of holding fifteen hundred people; and also the construction of many small booths for housing the numerous delegates from villages, churches and

schools all over the hills. Moreover huts were made for the white teachers. These all presented a novel sight, though very rude.

These meetings were usually held at the pleasantest season of the year. It was after the rains had ceased, a full moon was flooding hill, valley and forest with her silver light, and the harvests were all gathered. Then the people were at leisure, and had occasion to rejoice and be happy.

The time for the great gathering having arrived, let us go up with the multitude. Standing on some mountain top near the great tabernacle, let us watch the gathering of the companies. Behold the trains of gaily dressed delegates and visitors approaching on every path. The rich and brilliant colours of the holiday dresses of the women and girls, with the various coloured head-dresses of all, form a pleasing contrast with the dark green foliage of the surrounding forest. Especially beautiful is this scene when all are gathered in the great tabernacle. A visitor said on one occasion, when looking at such an assembly, "Why, they look like a bed of poppies."

On their arrival, they first gather about the huts of the white teachers. What cordial handshakings; for with them, this is a sign of Chris-

tian fellowship. Between the white teachers' booths (one for men and another for women), the ground has been levelled, and a large dining table of bamboo has been made. Here the happy disciples deposit their humble presents of flowers or fruits, which they have brought with loving and grateful hearts.

About seventy schools are here by their delegations, or representatives. Many of them have sent up companies of singers, the best they have; for there is to be a singing competition of the schools before the elders. This accounts for the large platform in the tabernacle.

Entering the tabernacle, you see tables for scribes, seats on an elevated platform for the elders and teachers, a reading desk for the preachers, and lamp stands or torch holders for the lights during evening service. Then the ground has been covered with slabs of bamboo.

This is the grand festival of the year for the Christian Karens: not for pleasure alone, though there is much of this, especially among the young people, but for the work of the Deliverer. Here besides worship in song, prayer and preaching, reports will be made of the previous year's labours, work planned for the coming year, mis-

sionaries chosen from among their young men and women for foreign as well as home fields, and contributions made for their support, and also for the support of their regular pastors and school teachers.

We will suppose the time for the first meeting has arrived. A large gong, the deep tones of which reach every part of the grounds, calls the assembly together. One of the schools takes the platform and sings while the people are gathering. On all sides, from booths and the thick jungle, they come, entering the tabernacle and taking their seats. What a bright, happy-faced company! The ordained pastors, foreign teachers, and the most honourable of the elders are seated on the platform. And now the pastor chosen the previous year to preach the annual sermon takes his place at the desk. The meeting opens with a praise service in which the vast congregation joins. The sermon of forty minutes' length is by no means dull. The preacher seems to feel every word he utters; and you cannot doubt the interest of the people in the subject though you may not understand a word of the sermon. And what singing marks these occasions, usually led by a cornet. How sublime the great volume of

song as it rolls out over the forest and hills, while voicing these words :

“ Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.”

The melody and inspiration of these noble songs of the church must be felt in such surroundings to be fully appreciated. They often move the white foreigners, as well as the simple minded natives, to tears of joy. Such experiences stir devout hearts, and emphasize the blessed hope of a coming Lord, when the whole world will know and adore him.

The sermon over, the special collection is taken for their work. Then the chairman is chosen ; and he is a Karen, if the white teachers are wise : for it is necessary to teach their people to manage their own affairs as rapidly as possible. The chairman takes his place with the dignity becoming his office. Secretaries are next chosen ; and on the occasion here described, Soo Thah was chief secretary. Readers, committees, and all necessary machinery for a two days' business meeting are appointed, and then the meeting is dismissed for the noon hour.

In the afternoon there was the singing of anthems and songs by the various schools, and

of hymns by the whole audience; and a digest of church letters was read, together with reports of committees, of schools, and of the treasurer of the standing committee. Then followed the reception of new churches. Well, this is all about a people who, a few years before, had not even a written language, and were living in savagery.

The report of the foreign missionary committee always commanded special attention. It was sometimes even exciting; for there were many brave things done for the kingdom of their Master by these young men. And yet they probably never thought they were doing anything praiseworthy, or were enduring hardships, and risking their lives for Christ's sake. At least they never seemed to think they were doing anything more than ordinary, and this was the beauty of it all. There were some cowards, no doubt; and also some lamentable failures. Are there not among all races? Yet was there a reality and an earnestness in their work for Christ, which gave a business air to these annual meetings, which made them very stimulating.

These meetings continued for two days. Several men were ordained to the ministry, and others were appointed to missionary work. The pastors

of the churches also were expected to devote a part of the dry season to mission work; and in their absence the deacons conducted the church services. Thus it appears that these Karen Christians do not believe in merely *holding* posts, but in *taking* them.

XIX

A PERILOUS EXPEDITION

DOUBTLESS God has a particular work for each of his children, and one which no other can do as well as he for whom it was designed. Happy the young disciple who puts himself unreservedly in the hands of God for any work, and then watches his opportunity, which always comes by his doing "the next thing," be it great or small. Only thus will he be ready for the great opportunity, when it comes. This was the manner of Soo Thah's life. So when the great occasion came to him, he was ready for it.

Away to the eastward, over the water-shed, several days' journey beyond Wee-la-kaw, his first mission field, there lived a very savage tribe; about which little was known, save that they were notoriously bad, and reckless fighters. In tours up and down among the churches and villages to the west of the water-shed, the teachers had often looked away to that range of mountains, and wondered how they might reach the wild

tribes beyond them. So great was the fear of these tribes among their neighbours, that their country was seldom entered. They were said to be fond of uncooked meat and blood. They were called Brecs, and belonged to the great family of the Hillmen. They were independent and lawless, every one doing what was right in his own sight. They lived largely by plunder. It was this tribe that had attacked Saw Aw's village and carried his family away into bondage.

At the Association, of which an account was given in the previous chapter, the question of sending teachers to this tribe was brought up in their missionary meeting. It was not strange that the young men hesitated. Saw Aw's case was before them. Attempts had been made to reach them on several occasions, but had failed. When the elders called for volunteers for this work, there was silence. Men would have sprung to their feet for work in almost any other field than that of these blood-thirsty Brecs. Who would dare enter such a field?

During the appeal, the secretary, Soo Thah, had bowed his head over his papers for a few moments, evidently in prayer. What great events often hang upon the decision of a moment!

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune." Victory or defeat in many lives, as well as in the great crises of history, has hung upon the decision of a moment.

His prayer was short. He rose to his feet; and few will forget the look of noble purpose which overspread his face, as he said in a simple way, almost as if talking to himself: "I am sorry for the poor Brechs, who know nothing of Yuah, or his love to men. I am very unhappy, because no one goes to them with the glad tidings. If my church will give me leave, I will go."

The chairman arose in the midst of profound silence, and said, "It is enough. Soo Thah will go to the Brechs. Let us pray." And the vast audience bowed their heads, while their leader poured out his heart in prayer for their first missionary to the Brechs.

To one who afterwards said to him, "Why, Soo Thah, you do not propose to go alone to these wild people, do you?" he simply replied, "Yes. If Yuah sends me, he will take care of me."

"But you do not know the road, and the way is long and lonely."

"Yuah," he replied, "delivered me from the mouth of the bear, and also from death when, crossing the swift stream, I was swept among the rocks. He also saved me from the mouth of the tiger. He will be with me in this work, no matter how difficult. I will go." And he did.

Obtaining leave of his church, he committed his family to its care, took his Karen bag with a Testament and hymn-book, and commenced his long journey. He was escorted by the disciples from village to village, until he reached the boundary of English territory; and then he pushed on alone over a path of which he knew nothing, except that it led into the country of the Brecs. The second day he reached the foot of the water-shed.

This range of mountains towers six thousand feet above sea-level, and is covered with a thick forest to its summit. When he had reached the top, there lay before him to the eastward the panorama of the unknown country of the Brec tribes. The view was grand, whichever way he looked. He had never gazed on such wild scenery, though his life had been spent in the mountains. Here and there in the distance, he could mark the localities of the villages, by the smoke of their fires. Broken and craggy peaks shot skyward, between

which were deep and dark ravines; and all was covered by the dark green forest, with occasional clumps of pines, marking the climate as semi-tropical.

We would like to know Soo Thah's thoughts, as he gazed upon this wild scene before him. He knew very well how this people had repelled all efforts heretofore made to reach them with the gospel. Saw Aw's experience was ever before him. He had also heard how traders had frequently visited the country only to be robbed and driven back, escaping in some cases only with their lives. He knew them by reputation to be the lowest morally, of all the Hillmen; that they lived largely by plunder; that their hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them, because of their lawlessness. And the un-accessible fastnesses of their mountain retreats enabled them to carry on their predatory warfare with impunity.

Yes, indeed, it was a brave man, who would dare go among them. As he reviewed the task before him, did Soo Thah's heart draw back, or faint? Was he almost sorry he had undertaken the work? We do not know, for he has left us no record of his meditations on this occasion.

Most likely, having made up his mind, he thought nothing more about it, except how best he could accomplish his undertaking. His faith in the call of Yuah, which he had received and doubted not, and the constraining love within him, was the impulse that sent him forward to the end. So he proceeded eastward, selecting his way as Yuah should seem to lead him over the unknown course which led into the heart of the Brec country.

As the way now led down the mountain side, he made rapid progress. In the course of the afternoon, he drew near to a village, but the number of paths confused him for a while; yet using his knowledge of jungle life, he finally approached the village. I omit the long name, as it is unpronounceable. Had Soo Thah been left to his own choice, this was the very last village in the whole country he would have selected in which to commence his holy mission, for it was the most wicked of them all. Here lived the most notorious band of cutthroats in the whole country. But God was with him as his leader; and so he was in the path of safety and success, though led among lions.

Fortunately, he met no one till he passed a turn in the road, where suddenly he found him-

self at the entrance of the village. A dozen men saw him at the same time. The women and children, screaming out their alarm, ran for their lives into their houses. They thought, no doubt, that the stranger was the advance of an attacking party. The men seized their spears and knives, and, rushing forward, surrounded our little hero with cries and threatening gestures. They were a band of fierce savages, moved with anger, and several poised their spears, and raised their long knives crying, "Kill him! Kill him! He is a spy sent by our enemies. Cut him down!" And indeed they would have done so, if Soo Thah had not stood there unmoved, quietly looking into their angry faces. What a picture of Christian heroism! Yet he did not count it thus; for when subsequently relating the experience, he evidently regarded it as a small matter.

As soon as he could make himself heard, he said: "Do men of war, do spies, go about in the day time unarmed and alone as I am? See!" and he pulled from his bag his Testament and hymn book. "See!" he exclaimed, "Are these weapons of bad men?"

His coolness, as a shield, had stayed the hurling of their spears, or the thrust of their knives.

"This is the white book," said he, "of which our ancestors have told us from ancient days. It speaks. Listen." And he read from the hymn book, translating as he read, for the dialect of this tribe was not that of the book, though he could speak it fluently. Then he sang. It was the first book or Christian song ever seen or heard by this people. As we have seen, Soo Thah was a sweet singer, and any one would be fascinated with his melodious voice. But he was now singing for his life. The Spirit of God was upon him. The great love which Jesus had put into his heart for this lost people rounded and softened the melody of the song. It smote upon the savage and angry hearts of these wild men like the warm rays of the sun upon a block of ice. What wonder that their spears sought the ground, and their swords their sheaths? It was as if an angel had suddenly descended from heaven and stood in the midst of them.

One song finished, another was called for, till he was weary; and then, having won their attention, he boldly announced to them the glad message Yuah had sent him to deliver.

As they listened, they began to say one to another, "This cannot be a bad man. We never

saw bad men do this way." And another joined in, "He talks just as Saw Aw does, and he is a good man."

"Are you a Jesu Kree man, and a brother of Saw Aw?" asked another.

"That I am," answered Soo Thah, and asked, "Do you know Saw Aw?"

"Know him," exclaimed several, "he is with the great chief of the Red Karens. His lips speak true words. His heart is white. He is kind to the poor and sick. We know him."

"Didn't he cure me of fever?" said another, "with bitter white powder, when I went with presents to the great chief?"

"Yes," said still another, "he was kind to us, though our fathers carried off his wife and children. We never saw anything like it."

Thus Soo Thah won a notable victory, and was received to the best they had; and they listened gladly to the message he had been sent to deliver.

He found here four neighbouring villages, located in a natural fortress. And he remained with them some time, teaching them about Yuah's great love, and reasoning with them concerning the folly of their lives of violence and crime. And it is easy to understand, that the

preaching of a man who could march alone into a den of wild beasts, as Soo Thah had done, was no kid glove affair. He boldly rebuked their sins, and declared that, while Yuah had patience with them, when they knew him not; yet now that he had told them of him, they could not escape his wrath, if they did not repent.

He also pointed out to them how the nats had failed to help them; for were they not too poor to have two meals a day, while he was among them; and were they not often obliged to live on roots, when their ill cultivated fields yielded no fruit, or their raids on other tribes failed of success? However hard his teaching, they listened; for they knew in their hearts, that he was right. Some, however, growled at his sharp words.

Having opened wide this door, Soo Thah began to be anxious concerning his family; and so he reluctantly closed his visit and returned to his village; and finally he made his report to his white teacher in the great city. His work in this village, however, was not finished, as the sequel will show.

XX

A STARTLING EVENT

THE year following the facts narrated in the last chapter, the great annual meeting assembled with a church near the western foot of the water-shed range of mountains before mentioned. The tabernacle and booths were located on the top of a high range of hills, before which the great mountain range towered grandly to the eastward. The mission party had hardly reached camp, when they were greatly surprised by the appearance in the distance of an armed band of wild men, with drums and horns, as if marching to battle.

The place chosen for the meeting being so near the dreaded Brecs, the more timid were fearful lest a raid was to be made upon the great assembly. Yet, after Soo Thah's experience among them, the better informed and the white teachers knew there was no reason for fear.

The strangers marched on over the hills, their discordant music reaching the assembly on the

hill, now full and loud, and again faintly, as they advanced. It was an anxious hour. All that vast gathering stood on the brow of the hill, watching the advancing band. Soon they marched up the hill, and into the circle of the encampment. They now proved to be two chiefs with their followers from the Brec village where Soo Thah had been labouring.

The leader of the band was a giant in stature, named Ho-Wee, or "The Blessed,"—a strange name for a man who afterwards told the white teacher, when questioned, that he had killed ten men (counting them on his fingers), and how many more he could not remember. What an unpromising band for civilization they looked to be, as they gazed about with a bold, defiant manner. But as they saw Soo Thah advancing towards them, their faces lighted up with a cordial greeting, and they saluted him with a rattle of their tom toms and shields, as though he, rather than Ho-Wee, was their chief. And indeed he was; for had he not, in the power of Yuah, conquered the whole village?

It can readily be imagined what interest and excitement were kindled by the presence of these ancient and dreaded foes at this great meeting.



BRECK CHRISTIANS.

Could these be the savage Brecs, who were sitting so peacefully among them? In fact, the interest seemed to be mutual; for Ho-Wee and his company had never seen anything half so interesting as that which now enchained their eyes and ears. The schools, their singing, the worship, the vast assembly, with the orderly exercises of the meetings,—all impressed these strangers much as a grand Christian Endeavour Convention in this country impresses the outsiders in a city which it has captured for its annual meetings.

On the other hand, the disciples had an object lesson before them showing the progress of the new kingdom. For were not they much like Ho-Wee and his followers only a few years before? And then how impressive was the enthusiasm at the foreign mission meeting the next day; when Soo Thah made his report, and Ho-Wee, the chief of the Brecs, arose towering among them, and told of the great good that had come to his people, and how they had now come for Soo Thah to return and dwell with them. Said he, "We are weary of nat worship. We want Yuah to be our King; for he loves and takes care of his children. We will follow and obey him." Then he added, as if it were an after-

thought, "If only the white teachers will visit my people just once, they will all surely turn to Yuah. They will see, and they will believe."

It is impossible to describe the effect of this speech of Ho-Wee, or the unstudied dignity with which it was uttered, or the glistening eyes of those who, the year before, had bowed their heads in prayer for the success of their messenger, Soo Thah, on his hazardous mission. It was a signal answer to their prayers, and so great was their enthusiasm, volunteers could readily have been found among the young men for any enterprise for their King, however hazardous.

The annual meeting broke up, and the white teachers with a goodly number of the more prominent pastors made ready, in response to the call of Ho-Wee, to visit his country. It was a three days' journey, and a very hard and difficult one; for the way led directly over the great mountain range before mentioned, and then descended and crossed a long stretch of broken country, through which flowed swift streams. Sometimes the path lay along the beds of brooks, where the forest trees met overhead, shutting out the sunshine, making the way dark and gloomy; or along the face of ragged cliffs, where it was difficult to

get a foothold. Then again there were two little white girls to go along with the party. How could they tramp over this difficult road?

“O,” said Soo Thah, “the school boys will be their horses, and they will ride picka-back very easily all the way.”

So when all the goods, food, clothing, bedding, cooking utensils, medicines, and such needful articles were packed, the long caravan filed down the hill towards the great mountain and the village with the unpronounceable name, Soo Thah being in the lead.

It was a fine sight to see that long procession of threescore men and women, walking single file, winding in and out of the forest, as they advanced.

The little girls were the pets of the party, and afforded much sport with their improvised ponies; for so popular was the service, that there were several school boys to each girl; so that when one became weary, another would take his place.

Ho-Wee and his party had gone in advance to prepare the road from the summit of the great range to his village.

The second day's journey brought the company

to a heathen village well up on the great mountain's face. The encampment was upon a narrow ridge, on either side of which were deep ravines. Though the people were wild, they came together and gladly listened to the proclamation of the gospel by the native teachers, being attracted by the singing and the white people. Early on the next day began the ascent of the last range. The air was crisp and invigoratingly cool, so unlike that of the plains. The whole party were full of spirit. Snatches of songs were heard here and there in the long caravan. The two little white girls, with their biped ponies, were always in the advance. Trees were less in height. Richly coloured and fragrant orchids abounded, and the girls' ponies were often climbing the trees to gather them for their riders.

By noon the top of the mountain range, over which Soo Thah had passed the previous year, was reached, and the same grand view was unrolled before the admiring gaze of the company. There being no water on the way, the bearers had taken some along in bamboos, so that lunch was there enjoyed in a more magnificent hall than ever held royal feasters.

From this point the party began to reap the

benefit of Ho-Wee's work. For he and his men had cut a broad road and swept it clean of brush and leaves. Then at intervals down the mountain side bamboos of water had been placed for the thirsty ones, and further on there was met a party of young men with baskets of cooked rice.

About three o'clock some one cried out, "Look! There's the village." And sure enough, apparently within a few miles, was the town to which we were going. But distances on these mountain roads are deceptive, and it was nearly dark before the village came in sight again.

As the weary company journeyed on, a very high bluff with a perpendicular face, and crowned with grass and trees, seemed to stand directly in the way. The road wound around the base of this bluff into a sort of amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by these high rocks, into which Soo Thah led his party. The whole population was on the watch; and a crowd of strange looking women were gathered near one of the houses beside the path. They had never seen a white person, and as Soo Thah marched past them, followed by the white teachers on their ponies, and the two little girls on theirs, it was too much

for them. Their faces were a study. Curiosity, surprise and fear were striving for the mastery. Some screamed and ran for their lives. Others forgot to do either, and stood crouching and staring with mouth and eyes wide open. One witch-like old woman, with a bamboo of water in her hand, having taken one look, could not restrain herself, and cried out in her astonishment, "A'Wee! A'Wee!" beating time with her bamboo bucket, the bottom of which was driven in and the water gushed out over her feet, much to the amusement of the visitors.

Then there was the running to and fro, the shouting, the barking of dogs, and the squealing of pigs, which usually attends the entrance of strangers into a Karen village. However, fear was overcome little by little, and curiosity took its place. "Which was the white man, and which the woman?" And those beautiful white children! They seemed almost ready to fall down and worship them.

Ho-Wee and his followers came up smiling, proud of his acquaintance, formed at the annual meeting a few days before. No place being found within the circle of the village for a quiet encampment, a bamboo platform was made on

the side of the mountain, overhanging the village, and here tents for the white teachers were pitched. On this outlook, aside from the degradation of the people, one might fancy himself in a fairy land. The tall, feathery-topped bamboos, the grand old forest trees with their loads of flowering creepers, the sweet music from waterfalls near by, the echoes from the rocks above, with the babel of distant sounds coming up from the village like the sound of many waters,—all these united to make this an ideal camping ground.

XXI

A BATTLE WITH THE NATS

IT did not take long for these natives to get acquainted, as there were no formal introductions to be exchanged. So the young people of the village were soon fraternizing on friendly terms with the school boys and girls who had come with the party. And these school children were quite as interested in these wild people, as were the white teachers; for they were a strange people to both. Their ways, and some of their manners and customs were quite different from those that prevailed on the other side of the water-shed.

The roofs of their houses were of conical shape, and came quite down to the floors, which, for sake of defense, were full ten feet from the ground. There were no means of getting light into the houses, save through the one door. Then there were large piles of wood stacked up under the houses, showing that a colder climate existed here, than the visitors were accustomed to meet.

There were also nat altars and offerings at every turn. Many skulls of oxen, which had been offered in sacrifice, were placed upon stakes on every path that entered the village, to frighten away hostile spirits. All these things interested the visitors. The dress of both sexes was very scant, and they were extremely dirty. They evidently regarded bathing as a mortal offence against health.

On the other hand, the well dressed and clean visitors were equally objects of curiosity to these wild people. They swarmed about the encampment like ants, and their voices, as they chatted with one another, sounded like the hum of a hive of bees.

Aunt Kaw Do, who had come with the party, was manifestly disgusted. She herself was a pink of neatness and propriety. And she went about sputtering, and freely expressing her opinion of a people who were "not half dressed, and as dirty as pigs." "Why," said she, "their clothing consists mostly of beads and brass wire." But it was not long, under the instruction of Aunt Kaw Do, before the young women of the village began to slick up in imitation of their guests. They were really to be pitied, rather

than blamed, for their untidiness, as they had never been taught anything better.

Aunt Kaw Do's disgust reached its climax soon after; when she saw the girls bathing at a water fall within view of all, and quite unabashed, though without suitable covering. And when sharply rebuked by her for their immodesty, they seemed to think her very exacting.

The next day, while the white teachers were at breakfast, they heard talking and laughter behind the bushes near by. On investigation, they found that a bevy of girls, who had bathed and cleaned themselves with soap, borrowed from Aunt Kaw Do, had combed their hair, like that of the girls from the city, had laid aside their beads and wires, and lengthened their skirts, so as to look really tidy. It was a pretty sight; but the poor girls felt so queer, they were quite abashed to come out into sight, being really ashamed of their neatness. A little encouragement, however, brought them forth from their hiding place, and soon they seemed to feel not only at home, but also somewhat better than their companions, who had not gained courage to follow their example.

In anticipation of the coming of the teachers, the villagers had erected a chapel for worship.

But it was so small that a dozen persons could not be comfortable in it; much less the hundreds who lived in the village. Soo Thah with others therefore pushed out one side of this chapel, thus making it an admirable stand from which to preach, while the people were sitting around on the ground. A few brought mats. Others sat on stones and sticks of wood, and the rest on the bare ground, while listening to the teachers.

Before the worship, a crier announced the meeting throughout the village; and all the people, men, women and children, assembled. Probably a wilder looking crowd of worshippers never assembled in any land. Only Ho-Wee and those who accompanied him to the annual meeting had any idea how they should conduct themselves. So they gathered about the stand, talking, laughing, smoking, dancing, and playing; for it was a very exciting time to them, such as perhaps they never had experienced, except when some raid was made upon them by their enemies. In the crowd around the platform, one chief was conspicuous for his hilarity and glee over the idea, that "they were going to worship." He acted more like a boy, than a chief of the people. As he sat down at the command of one of the teach-

ers, who was trying to bring some order out of all this confusion, he threw himself upon his back and kicked up his heels in a most uncouth and undignified way. All the while he was exclaiming, "We are going to worship Yuah; going to worship!" When quietly told that it was not dignified for a chief to behave thus, that it was not respectful to Yuah, or the white teachers, and that he would not act thus before the great chief of the Red Karens, he sat up, laid aside his pipe, and became a pattern of propriety.

The teachers took their places as soon as order was secured, and the services were not interrupted to the end. The message of the preachers seemed to meet hungry hearts, and there were some, we must believe, who on that day received truth unto life eternal.

The following Sabbath there were three services, to which the people came in crowds, and it was remarkable how quickly they had learned to behave themselves. During the day, Ho-Wee and several of the elders came to the teachers and said, "We want to enter the new religion. Will you destroy our nat worship? We dare not yet, for fear the nats will be angry with us, and slay us. When we are in Yuah, we shall not fear.

You are in him, and the nats cannot harm you. Yuah is more powerful than all the nats. We believe this, and we will worship him."

Of course, after such an appeal, the Karen teachers with the school boys among the party were only too glad to engage in "a battle with the nats." Monday morning the work began, and in a few hours a clean sweep was made of altars, charms, offerings and nat houses. These were all brought forth for a bonfire.

The excitement reached its climax when the little white girls took a hand in the battle. By the roadside there were growing long creepers or vines, which had sent down loops between two great trees. These loops nearly touched the ground, and they would have made admirable swings for the children of the village, if they had not been in mortal terror of them; because all the elders said, that they were nat-stairs, used by a powerful demon to pass from one tree to the other, which formed his dwelling place.

When one of the little girls took a knife and boldly advanced to cut this creeper, the people were horrified. "Why, she is so small, the great nat will surely kill her!" And I suppose they really believed it. She kept on cutting, however,

while the crowd watched her in great fear. Soon the creeper fell apart, and then a murmur ran through the anxious crowd, some exclaiming, "Why, she does not die. If Yuah can protect so little a girl, he can protect us strong men." So they were greatly assured by this simple act.

Among the offerings to the nats, which were destroyed, were little baskets of eggs, hung on bushes near the toy houses of the nats. Upon the little girls destroying the eggs in one of these baskets, the smell was so bad, that they declared not even the nats could endure them.

The work was now in full swing, and as the earth had not opened to swallow up the destroyers of demon worship, the people gained courage, and pointed out objects for destruction freely. Among others, there was a great banyan, in which lived a ferocious nat, a terror to all the surrounding country. Lo-thah, a pastor of a church in a neighbouring village, seized a knife and forthwith advanced to the attack of that enemy. This banyan had wide spreading branches with festoons of great creepers, and there were many signs of sacrifices on every hand, which had been offered to its nat. Fear still lingered in the

crowd, but it was fast giving place to confidence; and when they saw that even this mighty nat could do nothing in self defence, they began to encourage the teacher, and with the fall of each branch, there arose a cheer from the crowd. This gave the death blow, apparently, to this superstition among that people. The bondage of generations was broken.

Our party now being ready to take its departure, there was a rush for hand-shaking; for, as the villagers said, "Now we worship Yuah with you. We are in Yuah." This was their sign of brotherhood, but a new custom, and quite a ceremony to most of them.

The joy of a new freedom and hope sat on most faces, and both parties were happy. Soo Thah said, that it reminded him of what was said of our Lord by Isaiah, "He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Before leaving the village, it had been arranged to leave for their teacher Saw Hah, or Mr. "Go." Perhaps it would be better to translate his name Mr. "Push;" for he was a very

energetic man, and a valiant servant of the Deliverer. Soo Thah also remained to help him, until he could get the work well in hand.

After a few years a church of forty members was organized, and many other villages joined the movement. These churches and schools had grown up as the result of Soo Thah's brave expedition to the Brecs.

XXII

SAW AW'S VISIT

AFTER the return of the white teachers over the mountains, Soo Thah and his cousin one day had a very pleasant surprise in the visit of one whom we have had occasion to mention several times.

It will be remembered how cordially Soo Thah was received by this people, when they found he was a friend of Saw Aw. It seems that Saw Aw, who was living as a teacher with the great Red Karen chief, hearing that teachers had come to the Brec country, resolved to visit them; first, to explore and preach to the tribes on the way, and secondly, to refresh his own spirit by a visit with his fellow labourers.

So one night, quite unexpectedly, he marched into the village with his two followers. What a cordial meeting between these brave messengers of the Deliverer! Nor were the villagers less delighted to receive among them one of whom they had heard so much, and yet few had seen.

Saw Aw was older than Soo Thah, being now

past middle life. A modest, retiring man, he showed by a chastened spirit the effects of the severe discipline through which he had passed. He had a smile of peculiar sweetness. It will be readily perceived that he was the hero of the hour, and that he did much to strengthen the hands of Soo Thah and his cousin in their work.

Saw Aw brought interesting news, which the three spent the whole evening discussing; as it brought back old customs in contrast with the new, in which all were so much interested. The news was the death of the most noted chief among the Hillmen for many years,—the aged Kay Pho, or Kay Pho the Great, as he was generally known. He had been friendly to the new religion, and to Saw Aw particularly, who had been living in his village for several years.

Said Saw Aw, "You should have seen the funeral ceremonies, and the great crowds present. These ceremonies were most interesting and strange."

"Tell us about them," answered Soo Thah.

"Well," replied Saw Aw, "when he died, he called me and said, 'Tell the white teachers that I want them to come and teach my children the white book.' These were his last words. As



A RAIN-COAT OF STRAW.



THE RED KAREN CHIEF.

soon as he was gone, the elders, who had been sacrificing offerings to the many nats for his recovery, sent word to all the villages the great chief governed, and a vast multitude assembled to join in a solemn feast for several days, and to attend the burial.

His grave was dug fully twenty feet deep, in a beautiful grove of trees west of the capital town. With much dancing and music, they carried him to the grave, wrapped in richly ornamented clothes, and mats, and encased in a coffin, which was made from a solid log of wood hollowed out to receive the body. Placing him in the grave, they put his sword and spear of state by his side. The sword was richly ornamented with gold and silver work. Suits of clothes, and other things to be used, or to give dignity to a great chief in the new world, and a sum of money to pay his expenses, were added."

"Then these Red Karens," said Soo Thah, "really believe in a future, do they?"

"Certainly," replied Saw Aw. "All these things were buried with their chief, for they believed their Kala would follow his to the spirit land, and so mark him there the great chief he was here on earth.

"Then," continued Saw Aw, "they placed tons of stone upon the coffin, and finally filled up the grave with earth."

"Why were the stones heaped upon his coffin?" was asked.

"O, that was to keep thieves from stealing the wealth buried with him," was the reply. "But this was not all," added Saw Aw. "They next built a small house over the grave, and filled it with food of various kinds for his Kala to live upon in the spirit land."

"That is just what they used to do in our clan in our heathen days," said Soo Thah; "only the houses were made very small, and placed near the grave, instead of over it. They were also filled with food."

"Yes," added Saw Aw, "I have heard my father tell of a tribe of our Hillmen, who, after burning the corpse, preserved the bones carefully, and every year held a grand festival, during which the bones of all the clan, who had died during the year, were solemnly carried to the tribal burying ground, in some inaccessible place, which was kept secret from all the other clans, and was called the 'hill of bones.'

"Then," continued Saw Aw, "did you ever

hear of anything like this? Near the grave of the great chief, they made a large excavation at least ten feet deep, and put into it a horse, given to him some years ago by an English officer, who had made a treaty of peace with him in behalf of the English government. The poor horse starved to death. They said that he would have a horse to ride in the spirit land, as large as any English officer, and thus add greatly to his dignity.

"Formerly," proceeded Saw Aw, "these people were accustomed to bury slaves alive, with any great person, that he might have suitable attendants in the new world; and they would have done so on this occasion, if I had not threatened to report them to the English, if they did."

"I once witnessed a strange custom about the dead," said Soo Thah, "when I was a boy, which I never could understand; and I have often thought of it since. One of the elders died suddenly, but his friends said they were not sure whether his Kala was dead or not. So they placed his coffin in the middle of the floor. A slender rod of bamboo was thrust through the cover, so as to touch the body. A thread was tied to the upper end of the rod, and small

tufts of cotton, alternating with lumps of charcoal, were tied along the thread, at the end of which was fastened a silver or copper ring. Under the ring, suspended in the air, was placed a dish, in which was a hard boiled egg, nearly touching the ring. After a little time, the ring began to swing, and finally the thread broke and the ring fell into the dish. This meant that the Kala was still in existence, and the man would be happy in the next world. If the ring had not moved, then the reverse would have been inferred."

The conversation next drifted to the Bible teaching of a future life, and of the resurrection, and continued late into the night; for this blessed Christian hope filled their hearts with joy. Finally, Soo Thah turned to a passage in the Bible treating of the resurrection from the dead, and after reading it, Saw Aw offered prayer. Then they rolled themselves in their blankets, feet to the fire, and slept.

About noon the next day, as our three friends were cosily chatting, they heard loud shouting in the village, and directly a man ran up to the foot of the ladder and called for the teacher.

"What is the matter?" asked Saw Aw. It was soon explained. Some one, while strolling in the jungle, had discovered the trail of a drove of wild hogs; and, having followed it to the head of a ravine, had located the game in thick grass and bushes. He then walked quietly around them several times, breaking down the grass and bushes. This he did, knowing how timid the animals were, and that they would not cross human tracks, unless frightened. Thus he had practically fenced in the drove until he could call help.

Karens are born hunters, as you have seen in Soo Thah's case. And as these three teachers had their guns with them, which they always carried for protection against wild beasts, the hunting instinct seized them, and they were soon madly racing with the rest for the place where the game was located.

Drawing near, silence was commanded, that the game might not be frightened too soon. Many had brought along their large knives, and they at once began quietly circling about the game, cutting down the bushes as they went. In a short time they had the drove fenced in com-

pletely. Soo Thah now climbed a tree in the enclosure, and the others took stands where they could shoot the game when driven out.

All preparations being thus made, the dogs were let loose, and quickly the hogs were rushing with incredible speed against the fence on every side. Soo Thah shot one fine animal as he was dashing past him, and there was a perfect volley of shots and a babel of cries for the few moments following.

On the uphill side of the enclosure a dozen hunters were stationed. They had made the hedge here so high and strong, that they thought no hogs could jump over it or force their way through. So they stuck their spears in the ground, quietly seated themselves, and were chewing betel-nut at their ease, when several of the largest hogs in the drove rushed up, leaped over the hedge, and landed amongst them to their confusion and terror. Saw Aw, who was standing in sight of this scene, declared that it was a surprising sight to see these Karens tumbling over each other, as the hogs knocked them about. "For a moment," said he, "it looked as if they too had turned into swine, and were trying to run off on four legs with the rest." There was a

great laugh at their mishap; but they had a share in the feast of pork, when it was cooked.

Saw Aw spent several days very pleasantly with his friends, and then returned, much refreshed, to his work among the Red Karens.

XXIII

ANSWERED PRAYER

BY what has been narrated, it might appear, that the work begun by Soo Thah among the Brees was moving on prosperously and unopposed. But in spiritual things this never occurs among men. These young converts from heathenism were to be severely tested.

As churches began to multiply among the tribe, it happened to them, as always in such cases, that prosperity followed the new life; or the sons of Yuah were better fed, clothed and housed than in the old days of nat worship. The heathen saw this, and grew envious. Having stripped all the weaker villages near them of food, the stronger villages themselves began to suffer. So they cast covetous eyes upon the prosperous Christians, and began to plan a raid upon them. To execute such a plan was easy, since there was no law among this heathen people save that of might. "To the victors belong the spoils."

Some, however, objected to this plan; saying, "The Christian's God is not like the Burman's, nor like our most powerful nats."

Thus, you see, even these wild people had a profound contempt for the idols of the Burmans, regarding them as unworthy of notice. They were to them "dead gods."

The objectors urged, "Yuah is a living God, and we have heard that he takes care of his followers, and defends them." Others, however, wished to make the experiment on one of the Christian villages; and so find out if Yuah would help his children, or not. If he should not help, said they, "we shall know that he is a dead God, like that of the Burmans, and so cannot defend his children. Then we will eat up all the Christian villages; for they are few, and we are many."

This reasoning prevailed, and a time was set to carry it out. When the Christians heard of this, they were much concerned, and there was much prayer to Yuah for protection. Soo Thah had joined his cousin Saw Aw, at this crisis, and remained with him throughout all the stirring times which followed, till the victory was won. They sent letters to all their pastors and elders among the hills, notifying them of the intended

raid, and urging them to help with continued prayer.

It was hoped the threatened trial would not come; that Yuah would put his fear in the hearts of these savages, and prevent their attack; but God had something better for his children.

Suddenly, at cock-crowing one morning, an armed band rushed through a Christian village, and succeeded in carrying off two little boys, who belonged to Christian parents. It was during the rainy season, when it was very difficult to travel, owing to the heavy rain and swollen streams.

The issue between Yuah of the Christians and the gods of the heathen was thus clearly drawn by the heathen themselves. "Which would win?" This was the great question among the native Christians. You see they had not been long out of heathenism. They had made no test of the faithfulness of Yuah; as have his followers in Christian lands. They said, "Yes, he helped the Hebrews, and delivered them many times from their enemies; and we know he has helped his white children, for see how rich they are; but will he help us poor, ignorant, jungle people in the same way? Can he love us as these better

“races?” This was the doubt in the minds of these simple folk; and they were advancing to the trial with trembling steps.

Soo Thah rightly voiced their trials, when he declared to Saw Aw that he would rather face bears, or even tigers, than these spiritual foes. He doubtless meant that he could wield spears far better than he could use spiritual weapons in a spiritual warfare. And probably many readers can sympathize with him. “You see,” added Soo Thah, “if we could gather our clans with good arms in our hands, we could face ten times our numbers of these heathen; but now we must just be still, pray, and love our enemies, and wait for Yuah to appear in our behalf.”

“Well,” replied his cousin, laughing, “do not be discouraged. I believe Yuah will fight for us. He cannot permit all these churches, which are dearer to him than to us, to be destroyed. For were he to do so, how the faith of all the churches on the other side of the mountains would fail them. No, I cannot believe that he will fail us now, if we only pray and trust him. Did he not deliver the children of Israel from the waters of the Red Sea, and drown their pursuing enemies? Then there was David with his

sling and stones. Why, he was worthy to be a Karen! That giant was a heathen, and though so tall and strong, how easily this youth vanquished him, when Yuah was with him. Did not Yuah frighten away the Syrians from Samaria with a noise in the air? And did he not deliver the Moabites into the hands of Israel by causing a flood of water to look like blood before their enemies?"

"Yes, so he did," replied Soo Thah, his courage rising. "And did he not deliver a huge and savage bear into my hands? and my body from the mouth of the tiger? We will trust."

Then they wrote letters and sent them to all the pastors among the hills, asking them to come to Ho-Wee's village, and help them pray for the deliverance of the captive boys.

When the time came, a great multitude arrived at the appointed place, for the interest in this spiritual battle was very great and wide spread. Ho-Wee's village was about a day's journey from that where the children were held. When the pastors and elders were assembled, much prayer was offered to Yuah, his promises recited, their application to the case in hand pointed out, and so they encouraged themselves

in Him. Finally a committee was chosen to go and demand the release of the children.

Doubtless this committee had great faith they would succeed. They just believed the promises like little children; and these preliminary meetings had strengthened their faith. It appears, however, that God wished to test and purify their faith. Perhaps also they forgot, in their zeal for saving the boys, to give God the honour that was his due. Anyway, they not only failed to get the captives, but were driven out of the village in shame by the old chief, who led this attack upon the Christians.

"If you have brought three hundred rupees for each of the boys, as a ransom," said he to them, "you can have them. If you have not, and you are men, come and take them."

This was a declaration of war, and the committee returned to their companions greatly disheartened. Their faces wore a distressed look, and their feet were heavy, as compared with their going forth.

When they had made their report to the assembled Christians, saying that they did not see how the boys could be saved, for their captors were very strong, armed with guns, and had a

large backing of all the heathen villages; the venerable Ler-plaw, a man of great faith and experience, arose and exclaimed, "Young men, how many times did the children of Israel march around Jericho before its walls fell?"

"Why," replied one hesitatingly, for he felt the rebuke which was coming, "seven times."

"Yes, and how many times did Elijah pray for rain before it came?"

"Why, seven times."

"Well, how many times have we been for the captives?"

A murmur ran through the large company, and the tide turned, and began to rise again.

A new committee was chosen, and instructed to demand the captives in the name of the great Yuah, the living God, the God of the Christians. They were to say nothing more nor less, and then return.

Again the old robber chief refused, but his wife was alarmed. Said she, "Give them the children, or we shall all be destroyed. I fear Yuah, the God of the Christians." Others joined her, but the hard old savage was obdurate and would not yield. "Let Yuah come himself," said he, "and we will give them up."

It seems they had been afraid all the time that Yuah might appear, and so had not dared sell the boys, lest they should not be able to recover them. If Yuah did appear, then they planned to deliver them up, and so hoped to escape punishment for their crime.

Before the committee returned, however, a relative of this old chief came to the Christians with proposals of peace for himself. He had become thoroughly alarmed, for he himself was a notoriously bad and cruel character; having killed many people. The fear of Yuah had fallen upon him, and he was willing to agree to any terms to secure the favour of the Christians. So he readily agreed to stop his life of violence, and to do all he could to secure the release of the captive boys. This with the report of the committee on their return caused their hopes to rise; and the conviction grew that Yuah was going to appear in behalf of the Christians.

About this time the whole company of Christians removed from Ho-Wee's village to that of the captive boys, and there continued their prayers. About eight o'clock in the evening of the third day of these meetings, while the whole assembly were in prayer, messengers came from

Tee-peh, for that was the name of the robber chief, saying, that if the chief of the village and the parents of the children would come to him, he would surrender the captive boys.

To some this was a joyful message, but to others far different. When the chief of the village was asked if he would go, he arose and replied: "Brethren, you do not know this old savage, Tee-peh, as I do. He is a most cunning and treacherous man. He wants to get us into his power, and make assurance doubly sure. He will lay an ambuscade for us, and take us captive also. I will not go."

But some believed that Yuah had put his fear in Tee-peh's heart, as they had been praying he would do, and the discussion was most earnest, till volunteers were called for. Then as might be expected, Soo Thah, who had already "bearded the lion in his den," arose, followed by Saw Aw. Next the deacon of the Pah-way church, a grand old man, and the father of one of the children joined. Torches were lighted, as it was very dark in the forest, and after prayer for success, the party set out for an all night's march. The flashing torches lit up their path only partially. Yet they started off with a quick step, and were

soon lost to view in the gloomy depths of the forest.

They pushed on rapidly until about four o'clock in the morning, when the leader called a halt by the side of a singing brook of clear water. Taking off their bags, they brought out from them their simple food, and after returning thanks and asking the divine blessing, they broke their fast.

As they rose from their hasty meal, one remarked, "They said they would shoot us, if we came again without ransom money."

Soo Thah replied, "Yuah goes before us. We will not fear."

Having slung their bags over their shoulders, and drunk from the brook, they pushed rapidly and silently on again. And as the sun arose above the mountains, they drew near the village of their destination. Their approach was disclosed by the barking dogs, and the war drum was quickly sounded. The first boom of the great drum had hardly ceased its roll over the hills, before armed men began to gather in haste on a little rise in the open place among the houses. The women and children, thinking an attack was about to be made upon the village by the Christians, ran with terror into the jungles.

The step of the approaching party was quick, and before the company of defenders were in place, they had reached the open space, just mentioned, and halted. Tee-peh stood among his people, doubting what this new movement meant. All his followers, however, were fully armed, and formed a marked contrast to the little band of unarmed men, who faced them. Soo Thah drew out his hymn book, and in a loud voice, as if leading a large assembly in worship, exclaimed, "Let us sing hymn 124." It was a translation of the hymn beginning,

"Father, I stretch my hands to Thee."

Books were quickly produced, and that little company sang with a will. Like Soo Thah once before, they might be singing for their lives. The singing brought back the people who had fled; for that was a kind of warfare that harmed no one. Arms were grounded, and some squatted. It was to them a strange warfare; and yet they evidently felt the force of the spiritual weapons which they could not understand. They were charmed with the sweet singing, the like of which they had never heard.

After singing, the leader said, "Let us pray." This was another surprise to these heathen. As he prayed, all his companions kneeling with him, the Spirit of God fell upon them with marvellous effect. How earnestly Soo Thah besought Yuah to soften the hard hearts of this wicked people, and especially of the obdurate old chief; and that he would lead him to give up the captives, without bringing upon himself the judgments of Yuah.

Then rising from his knees, the pastor stretched forth his hand with a gesture of command, exclaiming, "Sit down, all of you. I am going to give you a message from the living Yuah. Sit down." He spoke as if he had the authority of a king. All quickly obeyed, squatting on the ground, the old chief well to the front.

Taking the hymn just sung as a text, Soo Thah sent home the truth with remarkable effect. I will not attempt to report that sermon, but it is safe to say, that no one went to sleep during its delivery. The singing and prayer had wrought upon the people greatly; but as the speaker contrasted the poverty and misery of those present with the riches and happiness of Yuah's children; and then declared to them that Yuah was ready

to receive and love them likewise, if they would turn to Him, it was manifest, by certain signs of assent, that he had reached his audience. So Soo Thah went on in his impassioned way with an eloquence native to these brown men of the hills, scoring point after point. During the address, Tee-peh had drawn nearer and nearer to the speaker, listening intently to him. His face softened, his whole bearing changed, and when the doxology had been sung, he arose, facing Soo Thah, and said with a smile, "Take them, take the boys, but give me your trousers, as a token of good will between us."

The effect can be better imagined than described; that is, if this had taken place among Europeans; but the Karens took it as a matter of course. The request of the chief was not so bad, when you know, as the old chief had discovered, that the preacher had on two pairs of trousers, as it was cold. Moreover, this request was in accordance with an old Karen custom of exchanging gifts in like transactions, as a token of good will. The chief gave up the boys, and received the pastor's present in return.

XXIV

ANSWERED PRAYER CONTINUED

WE will now return to the party who were left to pray and wait. It would be strange if they had not been anxious about the result of this final visit to Tee-peh. Yet the Karen pastors and deacons had been perfectly calm, whatever may have been their inward feelings. Towards evening, however, there appeared some restlessness in the multitude, which showed their state of expectancy. The usual prayer meeting was held in the evening. Would the messengers recover the children, or would they be defeated, and so the churches be discouraged, and the name of Yuah be dishonoured? This was the question uppermost in all minds, as was made evident by their prayers.

About nine o'clock that evening, while the prayer meeting was progressing, two gun shots rang out from the northern mountain range, and echoed back and forth from mountain to mountain. It was from the direction that the rescuing party was expected.

"What is that?" exclaimed one.

"Oh," answered an old man quietly, "Soo Thah and his followers are returning from Tee-peh's."

The prayer meeting immediately closed. All moved to the brow of the hill on which they were gathered, and stood looking across the deep ravine in the direction from which the signal had come. Directly torch lights were seen dancing in and out among the trees, as their bearers advanced; and soon the line of lights began to descend into the valley, where they disappeared for a few moments, which seemed to some like hours. Again they appeared, and rapidly advanced up the hillside towards the anxious watchers.

"Have they got the boys?" Ah me! the suspense! the uncertainty! A few minutes more, and the doubt was solved. Soo Thah, leading the company, stepped upon the platform, where stood the elders and pastors, closely followed by the deacon of the Paw-weh church, each with a boy astride his shoulders, and put them down amidst the glad company. A woman, who had been silent till now, rushed forward with a cry, and clasped one of the little fellows to her breast.

It was her son, whom she never expected to see again.

The scene following was indescribable. One gray haired old pastor stepping forward, commanded silence; and then, taking the other boy, put him between his feet, at the same time lifting his right hand to heaven, and exclaiming in a voice of deepest reverence: "We never saw it on this wise before. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has answered our prayers, and wrought for us a great deliverance. He has easily done what our wisdom and might could never do. He has put his fear upon our enemies, and saved us from their snares. He has delivered the captives without ransom. Let his great Name be praised!" And then followed such a praise meeting as is seldom seen in any land.

This was indeed a notable victory and answer to prayer. Though it made no stir among the nations of the earth, it mightily moved the Karens, both in Soo Thah's own country, and among the heathen Brecks. The news spread rapidly in all directions. It was a wonderful report that each had to tell his neighbour,—a new thing under the sun! Captives delivered without ransom! "It is all on account of the living Yuah, who

has come back to the Karens," exclaimed the Christians. "The captives were his children. He made their captors afraid."

Others, among the heathen, said: "This is the One we want for our King,—the One who is alive, and takes care of his people."

So many villages of these wild men sent for teachers. Schools were established, and the good work of enlightenment began. So great was the power of Yuah among the heathen, after this victory, that captives were at once surrendered, when it was known that they belonged to villages which had accepted his worship; and in one case, at least, when the captors heard that a teacher was coming to seek a captive, the child was sent to meet him on the way.

The next day by dawn the company had broken up, and were well on their way homeward. Several friends of Soo Thah and his cousin, however, remained for a brief visit. Among others was Tee-O, a man very much like Soo Thah in his brave devotion to Yuah. He had been very successful in all his work, having been instrumental in founding at least three churches.

During the day, as the little company reclined in the sun on a grassy bank, for the mornings

were cool, they fell to discussing the experiences of the past three days. Said Tee-O, "Soo Thah, when you saw the guns of Tee-peh's men pointed at you, yesterday, were you not afraid?"

"Well," answered Soo Thah, "I was anxious lest some rash fellow should fire upon us before we could begin our worship. After that, I had no fear." Then he added, as if to turn the attention of his friends from himself, "Tell us, Tee-O, how it was that you won those savage Padoungs to Christ in seven years. Was that too a case of answered prayer?"

"Yes," joined in his companions, "we have heard great things about your work at Senite. Tell us about it."

Tee-O looked about, as if he would rather some one would respond for him, and then began.

"Well, brothers, you know I had, by Yuah's grace, gathered a good church at each of the two villages I occupied on the west of the watershed. Then the white teacher asked me if I could take up a new work among the Padoung tribe in the village of Senite. These people were very wild and savage, and you all know what a pleasant home and garden I had at my last village; so I did not like to leave all for a new work. The

white teacher, however, asked me to pray over the matter, and follow Yuah's leading. I did so, and the longer I prayed, the plainer it seemed my duty to go to Senite. I then consented to go; but asked that Yuah would give me a good church there within ten years; though I resolved to spend my life there, if necessary.

"There was quite a company of us, when we first went to the village: the white teachers, a band of school children from the town, who were to sing for us, and several of our pastors, with myself.

"We found the village built upon a high rock, from three to four hundred feet above the surrounding country. The sides of the rock were perpendicular, and there was only one way of ascent, which was up a narrow and crooked path, and this very steep."

"Why did they build their houses in such an inaccessible place?" asked one.

"Because this village had many enemies," replied Tee-O, "whom they made by their robberies and violence."

Then he continued, "Half way up, the white teachers became weary, and we all stopped for

them to rest. Some Padoung women followed us, carrying heavy loads of wood and water. You know how it is, brothers, among the heathen. The women must do all the hard work."

"Yes," added Soo Thah. "And I have heard that the Padoung women have a specially hard life, because of their ornaments. Is that so?"

"Yes," replied Tee-O, "each of these well ornamented women, who followed us, had on from thirty to forty pounds' weight of brass wire in coils about their necks and limbs. Each coil was made up of one piece of wire, as large as my little finger. They wore little else save their ornaments. You should have seen how frightened they were, when they saw the white teachers. They would have run back down the mountain, had I not spoken to them."

"Did not those brass wires give them a horrid appearance?" asked one.

"O yes," replied Tee-O. "Their necks were lengthened, and their under jaws so pushed forward as to give them a disgusting appearance. It was painful to look at them."

"Did the women like all these ornaments?" asked Saw Aw.

“That was the strangest part of it all,” said Tee-O. “They were immensely proud of their bonds.”

Tee-O continued, “Having rested, we climbed to the top of the hill, and pitched the white teachers’ tents on the rocks, backed by a ledge rising high in the air above them. I pitied them, for they had no level and quiet place for their camp. We got out the little organ, and the school boys and girls sang, while all the people gathered about us. My heart sank within me, however, at the sight; for they were much wilder than any people I had before met.

“We found two or three who desired the new worship, but many opposed, for, said they, ‘If we worship Yuah, we must give up whiskey, and many other customs.’ ‘Yes,’ I added laughing. They further said they would have to stop beating their wives, for the women were as good as the men among Christians.

“‘Well, as for that,’ I then replied, ‘our fathers all thought so until the Deliverer came; for they believed this necessary to keep them in subjection.’”

“I well remember,” interposed Soo Thah, “how the elders in my village objected to the

education of girls, and how Wee-tha-soo stole a march on them. What a help she has been to me all my life! Go on, Tee-O."

"Well, we had an all night discussion," said he, "and finally the whole village joined in killing a pig, and each one ate of the pork, and so they made a covenant to worship Yuah. The next day we had a grand destruction of all their worship of the nats.

"Then they made me a hut, and I began a school. After two years, Yuah gave me the first converts. Five women presented themselves first to have their wires taken off. And we were obliged to call in the strong white teacher to take them off, they were so hard to bend. He was present at the time on a visit. The poor creatures could not hold up their heads, their necks were so weak; so I gave them large handkerchiefs to bind around their necks, till they should recover strength. I remember one girl wanted very much to be set free, but her mother was violently opposed; for she said if she took off her wires, she could never get a husband; and so she got a rope, and threatened to hang her daughter, if she did not obey her. The next year we baptized several and formed a church."

"How many have you in the church now?" asked one.

"Over sixty," replied Tee-O. "At the last baptism, thirteen presented themselves. Only one woman in the whole village now wears the wires. They have moved down from the high rock, and made peace with all their neighbours. Their village is now beside a brook, and they have a beautiful chapel, which," he added with some pride, "I built with my own hands. The disciples, however, contributed money, and hired men from the city to saw and prepare the boards."

"The Association met with you last year, did it not?" asked another.

"Yes," replied Tee-O. "The church entertained nearly seven hundred delegates and visitors for two days. It was a grand time, for everybody was so happy. Four of the white teachers were present, and they seemed happier than we, if possible. I astonished them with a bunch of roses, of which they were very fond."

"How long were you doing this work, Tee-O?"

"O, I never could have accomplished it," he replied, "if the Deliverer had not helped me every day. It was done in seven years."

"Then Yuah was better to you than your prayer," said another; "for you asked for the village in ten years, and he gave it to you in seven."

Then Soo Thah repeated reverently, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

All bowed their heads, and at the close responded with a fervent, "Amen."

XXV

HISTORICAL GLIMPSES

SOO THAH had now reached the height of his influence and usefulness. This story of the work of the Deliverer among these Hillmen would have failed, however, had it led you to believe there were few like our hero among the many thousands of this brown race, who had now joined the standard of the cross. No, there were many, both young men and women, who had given themselves with singular devotion to the service of the Deliverer. Soo Thah was only a type of multitudes, who loved the Deliverer more than life. Timid by nature, this love had made them as bold as the apostles Paul and Peter, so that they counted not their lives dear even unto death.

And the time was now drawing near, when they were to be tested as a race as never before. War is a terrible calamity, but the law of self-defence is innate, and as strong among these new followers of Yuah, as among older Christian races.

These Hillmen had come to be much like the Hebrews in the times of their kings. They had accepted Yuah as their Master, and were ready to defend their new faith with their lives. Hitherto, as we have seen, the dominant race were the Burmans. Idolaters, and extremely proud, they regarded these Hillmen as did the Egyptians their Hebrew bondmen. After the Deliverer came, the parallel was more marked. This being the relation of the two races, the Burmans were very reluctant to see the Karens pass out of their power. They were accustomed to say, "The Karens are dogs. Every one knows that they are a base and cowardly race." Quite beyond their conception was the new and mighty force which had entered into the lives of these despised Hillmen; nor could they possibly understand its potent influence in their utter ignorance of the Christian faith.

So now, when this brown race aspired to rise and become a nation, with a name among the peoples of the earth, their former masters were filled with wrath, and they neglected no opportunity of letting it loose upon them.

As we have seen, the English Queen had now for years extended her protection over several of

these tribes; and wherever her authority reached, the Karens enjoyed rest, and rapidly advanced in Christian civilization. From the first appearance of the officers of her Majesty in Burma, these jungle people had attached themselves to them; and, in early days, had fought side by side with them in the establishment of the Queen's authority. All her officers, who came to know them well, declared that she had no more loyal subjects in all India than these Karens.

But now they must be newly tested, and more severely than ever before. They must again win their way to the confidence of the British officers, and show their fitness to be called men, and to hold a man's place among men.

Those who had witnessed their patient endurance under severe trials and persecutions from the Burmans, before the Queen's rule came to their succour, believed in them. But as they were timid and retiring in the presence of strangers, most of the Queen's officers at this time in their history, knowing little of their real strength of character, held them in like contempt with the Burmans. Hence the place their fathers had won in the esteem of the first rulers of the land must be regained. This explanation is necessary.

in order to understand the effect of the exciting times that are now to be related.

The world is so large, that there are many interesting and wonderful things happening every day, of which we do not hear. So very likely the history we are now to tell is almost unknown in America. Some school boys may have noticed a small change in the map of Burma, but know nothing of its cause. In Burma, however, it was quite different. The great Queen had occupied one half of the country for some years; while the northern half was ruled by a wicked Burman king, named Theebaw.

This is not a high sounding name, though he called himself, "The golden footed Majesty, Lord of the White Elephant, Child of the Sun, Ruler of Seven Countries," besides many more great names. But with all his boasted assumptions, he was only a cruel and blood-thirsty despot. So proud was he, that he really thought himself able to conquer England, and perhaps the whole world. He had such faith, or credulity rather, in certain tattoo marks on his person, made by a priest of the idol he worshipped, that he really thought no one could cut, spear or shoot him; and all his subjects were as credulous as

himself. He boasted he could easily drive the great Queen's subjects into the sea, and would do so, when it suited his royal pleasure; and his subjects were of the same mind.

So he went on insulting the Queen's subjects, and oppressing his own, until all good men were quite out of patience with him. This, however, was nothing to what he finally did. For, fearing some of his relatives might wish to be king in his place, he cruelly slew eighty-six of them at one time. Some he beat to death, some he choked, and others were buried alive. One poor old man, who had been a governor of a city, was put to death in too cruel a manner to be described. This king and his minions just revelled in savage ferocity.

Not long after these atrocities, the small-pox appeared in the royal city. And this scourge was attributed by the king's counsellors to the fact, as they said, that the oil from two jars had disappeared. These jars of oil, with four living persons, had been buried under the four corners of the city walls, when first built.

This was bad enough, but the "Nan sin budda mya," or royal ruby, had disappeared. A tiger had also escaped from the royal garden, and eaten

a man. All these things, with the outbreak of the small-pox, convinced the king that something must be done to appease the offended nats; for though the Burmans are idolaters, they believe in nats as much as do the heathen Hillmen. Accordingly, by the advice of his counsellors, he determined to sacrifice four hundred human beings,—a hundred each of men women, boys, and foreigners. This was beyond the endurance of the good Queen. She could not permit her humblest subjects to suffer such cruelty, even at the hands of his very golden-footed majesty. So when the king's officers began to seize persons for this terrible sacrifice, the subjects of the Queen protested, and the king was frightened. Some, however, were sacrificed. How many was never learned.

For a number of years after these massacres king Theebaw refrained from any wholesale slaughter of men and women, though here and there through his kingdom persons frequently disappeared, and it was said they died of "official colic;" evidently meaning that the king had ordered them slain for reasons known only to himself.

In course of time, however, the whole world

was startled by a terrible massacre, which cost king Theebaw his throne. Under different pretexts he filled his jails with men and women, being controlled doubtless by his superstitions; then shutting the city gates, he sent his cruel officers to slay them all. No mercy was shown to age or sex. It was estimated that quite three hundred persons, many innocent of any crime, were slain at this time.

This stirred the subjects of the Queen mightily, and they called a great meeting, in which king Theebaw was declared to be no longer fit to reign. Action followed this meeting, the British troops marching to the Burman capital, where they captured the wicked king, and he was subsequently sent into banishment, thus ending his outrageous cruelties.

Immediately a strange thing happened. Though the people professed to believe that their king was divine, and could not be taken by any power; that he would soon reappear, and drive the English into the sea, as he had threatened; yet, marvellous to say, they formed themselves into bands from ten to several hundred strong, called Dacoits, and roamed over their own country, robbing burning and torturing. Had they

fought the Queen's subjects, it would not have been strange; but they plundered and tortured their own countrymen. Their cruelties were like those their king had practiced, and were too terrible to relate. And, more surprising than all, the Burmese subjects of the Queen, though they were prosperous and happy under her rule, joined their evil countrymen in this great madness. The Queen's officers had put some of them in places of honour. Some were local governors, many were clerks, and still more were policemen. And now that these local governors, clerks and policemen joined in this strange uprising of their countrymen, and, in the absence of the English troops, the English towns and cities were left defenceless, and were being plundered and burned; a special opportunity was given our little brown clans to demonstrate their loyalty, and to gain an honourable name.

I am sure the reader is asking why these wicked Burmans did not attack the Karen Christians. This is just what happened. Said the Burmans: "All our troubles have come upon us because of these Karen dogs. They have taken the white man's God to be theirs, and our gods are angry. Moreover, they are setting them-

selves up to do great things with their schools and their books."

Thus the Burmans were growing very jealous of the progress of their former slaves. And they imagined it would be easy to destroy them root and branch. So they began to attack the Karen villages, pillaging and burning them.

But these Karens had not been receiving all their training in schools for years to no purpose. Among other things, they had learned the advantage of united action. Nor were they ignorant of what had taken place at the Burmese capital, and throughout the whole country up to this time. For they had their weekly and monthly papers, printed on their own presses, and circulated throughout all the Christian villages. And there were no more eager newspaper readers in all the country than they.

Of course, Soo Thah was among the foremost in all these matters. He was a recognized leader of his people, and wore the white turban, according to the custom of the old and distinguished men of the clans.

Just when the matter originated is unknown; but about this time a spontaneous movement arose among all the clans of the Hillmen to con-

stitute a "National Society," to meet this crisis in their history. From every part of the land their representatives assembled. Messengers from distant Tavoy, evangelists, teachers, preachers, chiefs of clans, and village elders composed this great assembly. Here were found many who, before the coming of the Deliverer, had been mortal enemies in their blood feuds. There was also a sprinkling of delegates from among the heathen. For the common danger forced them to join their better informed brethren, the Christians.

These assembled delegates proposed to organize themselves into a permanent society for the mutual protection of all their tribes; and they assumed the name of Dau-ka-lu, which means "All the clans."

The significance of this general movement is manifest. These scattered tribes were becoming a united people. Instead of each clan acting for itself, they proposed to unite; and this was undoubtedly the legitimate result of the new life from the Deliverer. Satan divides and destroys. Jesus unites and saves.

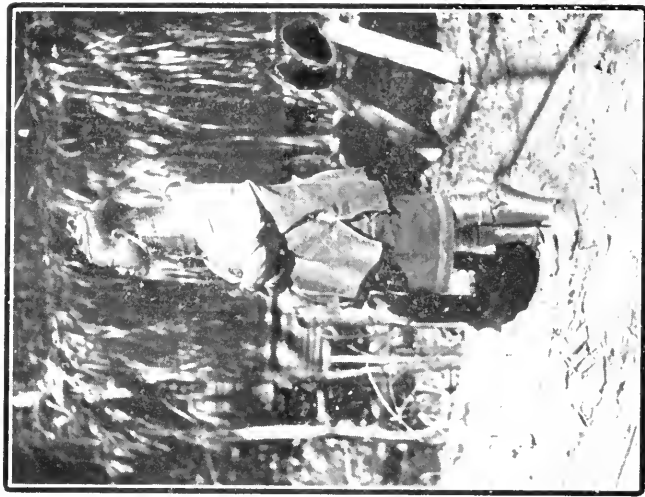
XXVI

THE DAU-KA-LU

A MORNING in early May within the tropics has no parallel in other climes. All nature sends forth an exhilaration, which seems to stimulate every living creature. The ground is baked hard by the hot sun through the long dry season, and yet Flora bursts her bands and springs forth to vigorous life in thousands of brilliant, variegated buds, leaves and flowers; trees send down a constant shower of fragrant dew from opening buds and flowers; the lotus in its pool of water opens its petals to breathe the fragrance; the streamlets in their rocky beds sing a chorus to the morning songs of many bright coloured birds; parakeets fill the forest with their sharp cries; baboons in distant woods scream with delight in a shrill treble that can be heard for miles; and dense mists, covering river or lake, hang a half hour, as if reluctant to leave, and then slowly fade away, leaving the sapphire heavens without a stain.



MEH-TEH, A KAREN PROPHET.



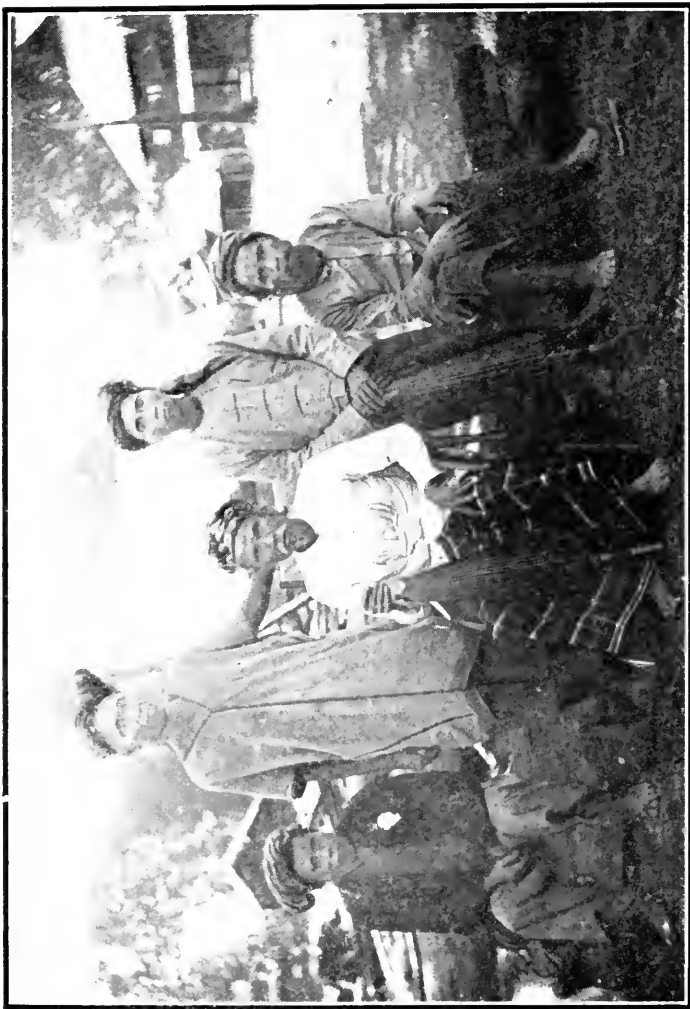
PADOUNG WOMAN WITH 30 POUNDS
OF BRASS ORNAMENTS.



Such was the morning on which the Dau-ka-lu assembled to discuss the crisis narrated in the last chapter. Their early meeting was one for prayer. It was a remarkable assembly, both for the occasion which called it together, and for the character of the men composing it. Soo Thah, his cousin, and Ler-plaw, and several others whom we have met were there; also elders from the south, and the west, who bore marks of former sufferings at the hands of the cruel Burman for the Deliverer's sake. From the north came the venerable prophet Meh-Teh, and his son, Mya-u, of whom we shall hear more as the story proceeds. There was also Kyou-Keh, or "Hard Rock," a sweet-voiced, gentle-mannered, loving man, yet brave and true, who had won a grand record as a zealous and fearless preacher of the glad tidings. It was told of him, that the chief of a large village, on hearing of his approach, said, "Let him come to me, and I will make two or three holes through him with my spear; and if he does not die, we will believe him and worship Yuah." On hearing this, Kyou-Keh true to his nature, marched at once for the village. Meeting the old chief, he said to him, "I hear you are going to thrust me through

with your spear. Here I am. If you wish to thrust, do so. I trust in Yuah, and have come to proclaim his word." At this bold utterance the old chief was struck dumb, and listened attentively to what was said to him.

Already in this Burman rebellion, this remarkable man had done royal service. Only a few weeks previous to this meeting, a band of Dacoits attacked a Christian Karen village, and burned it together with a beautiful chapel, killing several of the villagers. The charred posts of the chapel were all that remained. Kyou-Keh hastily collected his neighbours, and set out in pursuit of the robbers. It would have been quite hopeless for him to have appealed to the government for help; for the Burman policemen had largely joined the rebellion, and some of them were probably with the attacking party. Marching all night, they surrounded the robbers' camp at dawn and captured the whole band without firing a shot. They then returned post haste to the burned village, through which lay their course to the nearest government station; and, while taking their breakfast, tied their prisoners to the still warm posts of the burned chapel. It was a case of poetic justice, which the Burman freebooters



KYOU-KEI, THE MIDDLE FIGURE IN THE GROUP.

did not relish. The prisoners were finally delivered into the hands of the magistrates.

Later, at the request of an English official, Kyou-Keh joined him with some of his neighbours in the capture of another band of lawless men; and he so distinguished himself, that the Queen's highest officer in Burma gave him a silver-mounted sword, and a medal of honour at the close of the war.

Here also was Ka-la-maw, who afterwards received a government commission to defend his villages, and who had already fought several severe battles with the enemy. He too was rewarded by the government for distinguished services at the end of the war.

Among the younger men was Kho-Nee, recently out of school. He was a head taller than his companions. Few realized his future. He joined the government forces, was put in command of a large body of his countrymen, and served the government faithfully for many years, winning for himself and his fellow Karen soldiers the highest praise.

Here too were Mau-Yay and Myat-Keh, now very old, men of God, who had led hundreds of their countrymen to Christ. In early days they

had suffered much at the hands of these idolators for the Deliverer's sake. They had also rendered signal service to the Queen in the establishment of her reign in Burma.

The meeting was called to order by a Karen barrister, who had taken his law degree at an English University, winning a medal over all competitors. He was elected chairman.

It should further be noted that the assembly was chiefly composed of young men like Kho-Nee, and was specially designed to arouse in them, and through them in their fellows, that national and patriotic spirit which had marked the valorous deeds of their fathers during the first conquest of the English in Burma.

After the organization, the Chairman stated the object of the meeting to be,—

First, To discuss measures for promoting a closer union among all the clans of Hillmen, in any matters pertaining to the Queen's government in Burma, and their future welfare as a united people.

Second, Discussion of the attitude to be taken in regard to the rebellion now existing.

Third, Discussion as to the matter of a Karen representation at the visit of the Viceroy, and at

the Queen's Jubilee, soon to be held in the chief town of the Province.

The assembly disposed easily of the first question, for there was only one sentiment regarding it.

The second question called forth much discussion; not because there was any difference of opinion among the delegates, but rather because of the distrust towards their people, which prevailed among the officers of the Queen then in the country.

As has been intimated, some of these officers could not believe that the Hillmen, so retiring, and seemingly so timid, would display a brave spirit before the enemy. Following the lead of the more polished, but deceitful and cowardly Burmans, they regarded the Karens as "dogs."

The feeling of indignation against this character attributed to them blazed forth with startling force in these meetings of the Dau-ka-lu. Said Thah Mway, a quiet, retiring man, but perfectly fearless in battle, now fresh from the war in the south, "Let the Queen's officers give us arms and ammunition, and we will clear all Lower Burma of Dacoits in six weeks, and ask nothing for our services. Our enemies are well armed."

Then he added, quoting an old Karen proverb, "‘Ten to one is fair play, when that one is a Karen.’ Give us a chance, and we will show the Queen’s officers what we are made of."

Another said, "We must fight the Queen’s enemies in our own way. We must never join the police [Burmans], and so degrade our name and sacrifice our strength. We want no man in our fighting line, who is not a Christian, or the owner of at least a thousand rupees in land and houses."

"They say we are cowards and will not fight," said Myat Koung. "Their treatment of us would make us such, if the blood of our fathers did not flow in our veins. Listen to this. One of my children could not get a written permit from the Governor to carry his gun, though so ordered, because of the obstructions put in his way by petty Burman officials. He had been a prisoner in the hands of the robbers, and they had made a cross to crucify him. He had no hope of escape; but, working his hands loose, he made a dash for liberty. Three shots were fired at him at close range; yet he escaped and joined his friends again in defence of their homes. He has waited for three months for that permit, and

only received it as I left for this meeting. Are such men as he dogs?"

Then arose the venerable Myat-Keh, and there fell immediate silence upon the great assembly; for he was widely known and loved. He too had suffered much for the sake of the Deliverer in the old days. "Children and grandchildren," he began, "I rejoice to see that the blood of the ancients has not grown thin in the veins of this generation. You are worthy sons of the fathers. Listen and follow their example, if need be; but may Yuah spare you.

"Saw-Lee," he continued, "was a brave man. While proclaiming the great love of the Deliverer, he was seized by a Buddhist priest, and thrown into prison, with his feet in the stocks. He was stripped of his clothes, though it was very cold, and thus left cold, hungry and thirsty all night. The next day the spotted-faced executioner of the Burman Governor, with a heart like a rock, dragged him before his master, and stood near with rods to beat him. He had suspended him by his heels, so that his shoulders barely touched the ground. The Governor wished to force him to reveal the names of the Christians, who worshipped with him, that he might seize and torture

them also. Saw-Lee prayed for strength to resist. He resolved to die rather than betray his friends. For several days he was thus tortured nigh unto death; but he remained firm until ransomed; at which time he was more dead than alive. Then his old mother tried to persuade him to give up preaching the glad tidings, which had brought such sufferings upon him. But he replied, 'I remember how the Christians in early days suffered for the Deliverer's sake, when proclaiming his gospel, and I must follow their example.' "

The old man paused as if overwhelmed with the memory of such sufferings. Several, however, urged him to proceed, and to tell them about Thah-Gray, the blessed, the first Karen martyr.

"Yes," said he, "Thah-Gray was my particular friend. I tried to save him, but the Burmans were too many for us. Thah-Gray was a great preacher. He was seized with thirty-nine of his people, and thrown into prison. For many days the pastor was tortured. He was repeatedly hung up by the neck, and beaten till nearly dead, to extort money from the Christians. Once they piled wood under the room where they were all confined, and threatened to burn all of them to-

gether, if they did not promise to give up the worship of Yuah.

“When these cruel Burmans had extorted all the money from the Christians they could, they set them free, but crucified Thah-Gray in the most cruel manner, because he would not deny Yuah. While he was on the cross, they reviled him much as did the Jews our Lord, when they put him to death in like manner; saying, ‘Let Yuah come and take care of you, if he will, and then we will believe.’” This martyr was rightly named; for Thah-Gray means “Good Fruit.” He was indeed the good fruit of our Lord’s blessed work among this brown people.

This narration of Myat-Keh made a profound impression on his audience. There was a visible clinching of hands, and a tightening of lips, which indicated that the spirit of the fathers was by no means dead.

After much talk it was decided to be the duty of all Karens to stand by the Queen’s Government, under this attack of lawless Burmans, till the last foe surrendered, and to advise all Karens to enlist in the service of their rulers, whenever they would be received and arms be given them.

The third question was quickly disposed of, and Than-bya, a man of good English education, was appointed to write the address to be delivered at the Queen's Jubilee. He was also chosen to lead the representatives of all the clans, who might be present on that occasion, in the presentation of the address, also at the Viceroy's visit.

While the Dau-ka-lu was yet in session, messengers hastily appeared, announcing that a Burmese chief, named Boh Hline (Boh means chief), with a large band of armed followers, was ravaging the country in the west, where lived Myat-Keh.

The chairman calmly arose, and said, "Brothers, we must go to the defence of our families. Let us sing the doxology." So the meeting was dismissed, and in a few hours the delegates had all dispersed. They were full of the spirit of the meetings, and ready for brave deeds in defence of their homes, their new faith, and their Queen.

XXVII

BOH HLINE

AN ancient fable tells of a famous athlete, who sowed dragons' teeth, and forthwith an army sprang to life. So it was in this time of our story. Bands of armed men sprang into life all over the country, as if from the ground, filling the land with violence and blood-shed. They were so numerous and aggressive, that Europeans were obliged to patrol the towns in a common defence; while outlying villages were left a prey to the Dacoits.

This was the time and hour for our little brown people, and they speedily embraced it. One who knew them best has said: "A few weeks' desperate fighting changed everything. No one had gauged the unifying power of Christianity, or guessed that these loose grains of sand (the clans) had been welded into a terrible weapon."

A captain in Her Majesty's service was the first to act. Long before the gathering of Karen levies were sanctioned by the government, he had enrolled and drilled a company of seventy.

Without encouragement, the Karen fought his way through sneers of the Government officials, till at a Durbar, when the Viceroy of India was present, the Chief Commissioner of Burma said: "I have never been so much astonished as at the Karens fighting so well."

So it happened that, as the worth of these Hill-men revealed itself, their friends multiplied among the Queen's officers, till they were found in all parts of the land. Mr. Smeaton, who afterwards became officiating Chief Commissioner, says in his book (*The Loyal Karens of Burmah*), "It is not often given to witness such a remarkable development of national character as has taken place among the Karens under the influence of Christianity and good government. Forty, aye, thirty years ago, they were a despised, grovelling, timid people, held in open contempt by the Burmese. At the first sound of the gospel message, they sprang to their feet, as a sleeping army springs to the bugle-call. The dream of hundreds of years was fulfilled; the God who had cast them off for their unfaithfulness had come back to them; they felt themselves a nation once more.

"Their progress since then has been by leaps

and bounds, all from an impetus within themselves, and with no direct aid from their rulers; and they bid fair soon to outstrip their Burmese conquerors in all the arts of peace."

It will be recalled that the meetings of the Dau-ka-lu broke up with the announcement of an eruption of Dacoits in the west. The Karens hastily returned to defend their homes, and also their Queen's authority, if called to do so. The reader can well believe it was a strange and unwelcome duty to the white teachers, men of peace, to act in matters of war. Yet so long as wicked men acquire power to torture the innocent, it seems to be necessary for men of peace to become men of war, for the time. Our Pilgrim Fathers, true men of God, were often obliged to attend worship with arms in their hands. It was so now with the white teachers among the Karens; though it was a duty they would fain have shunned. The white teachers in the south were now engaged almost day and night in helping their Karen disciples to obtain from the Government the means of defending their homes and Queen.

Boh Hline was notorious for his terrible cruelties, sparing neither women nor children. Even

infants were cruelly killed by him to torture their mothers. At one time he seized an infant from its mother's arms, put it in a mortar, and pounded it to death before the eyes of its mother. He had destroyed many villages. The officers of the Queen, with their heavy-footed foreign policemen, could not overtake him, though they had often attempted this.

The Burmese people were more afraid of Boh Hline than of the English troops; and so, strange to tell, they helped these Dacoits, even when they were being plundered and tortured by them.

A large reward had been offered for Boh Hline, dead or alive. Meanwhile lesser Dacoit chiefs were doing their work of destruction all over the land; and the loyal Karens were kept busy marching and fighting. The rains had begun in earnest. The brooks were full, and the rice fields were turning to mud. It would soon be time to prepare for rice-planting.

One day two Karens, with wet garments clinging to them, appeared at the mission house, where the white teacher was busy with his correspondence about guns and ammunition.

"We come, teacher," said they, "for your letter to the magistrate of Bassein to enable us

to buy powder. Our guns are of no use without ammunition. We know not, teacher, when Boh Hline, or some other Dacoit will appear at our village."

"Then you have not given up your guns to the Dacoits yet, as our rulers said you would, have you?" asked the teacher, laughing.

The Karens grunted in reply. And then Ko Thwah, the elder, said, "Our guns are useless without powder."

"Give us ammunition," said Saw Bya, the younger, "and we will bring in Boh Hline's head within a week." Then he added, "What does it mean? Will the Queen's officers take our guns away? Three days ago the police came to our village and demanded our guns by order of the Queen's officer, they said."

"What!" exclaimed the teacher. "The police came to disarm you, my children?"

"Yes," replied Ko Thwah, "but we refused, saying, that we had the guns from you, and would deliver them only to you, or by your order."

"Well done," said the teacher. "How many police were there?"

"Six men and a sergeant," replied Ko Thwah.

"My children," exclaimed the teacher, "your

police were Dacoits. Last Saturday Boh Iiline captured a police station and took their rifles and uniforms. This was a trick to capture your guns. Yuah has saved you from being deceived."

"Only three days ago!" exclaimed Ko Thwah. "Let us follow them, and bring back the Boh."

"Yes," added Saw Bya, "if the teacher will give us some powder and big shot for our guns. And don't forget the hymn books for our teacher, Ba Kaw."

Near dark the two Karens reached their village, and found the people at worship in their little chapel. They were singing their first hymn. Quietly entering, they reverently joined in the worship. When the meeting had been dismissed, they told the elders present who their recent police visitors were.

"I suspected as much," remarked Ba Kaw, quietly.

"We will follow them," said Ko Thwah.

"It is good. I will go," responded Ba Kaw.

All the worshippers had remained in the chapel to hear the news. Ba Kaw said to them, "Brothers, this Philistine kills many people, even little children. When he will fall upon our people, we cannot tell. We will go and capture him. Let

us ask Yuah to help us, as he did his servant David, when the giant defied the armies of Israel." Whereupon all bowed their heads, and Ba Kaw besought the help of Yuah.

Then said Ba Kaw, "We have five guns. We want two more men."

All the young men of the village springing to their feet, two were chosen by lot.

The sun had set and the night was dark; but Ba Kaw knew the way. They marched till past midnight, and camped in a wayside hut. At dawn, having eaten a little cold rice and dried fish, they were again on their way. Soon the thunder began to mutter in the distance, and then with a roar and crash the fierce wind set in, driving great masses of angry clouds, and the rain fell as it falls only in the tropics. But the Karens halted not. They pushed rapidly on, protecting their gun-locks under their arms and umbrellas. All day long they kept up their march, scarcely speaking a word. Near night the barking of dogs told them they were drawing near a village. Ba Kaw called out his name, for it was a friendly Karen village, and speedily he and his followers were made welcome. A supper of steaming hot rice and venison (for they

had killed a fine deer that day) was soon set before them. After eating, the elder asked, "Whence go you?"

"We follow Boh Hline."

"Yes," said the old man, "two days ago seven policemen and a large number of armed followers passed here."

"It was Boh Hline," replied Ba Kaw.

"They carried heavy loads and marched slowly," said the elder.

"By Yuah's help, we shall overtake them," said Ba Kaw.

"Boh Hline is a tiger," responded the elder.

"We will tame him," answered Ba Kaw.

"They are many. You are few," said one.

"We are Karens," rejoined the teacher.

The rain continued its steady beat upon the thatched roof, and it was late. So Ko Thwah said, "We will sleep."

They were shown their mats already spread for them. Bowing a moment, while Ba Kaw led in prayer, they had no sooner laid down, than they fell asleep. Before dawn, they were awakened by their host, and sat down to the breakfast which had been prepared for them.

The rain was still pouring down, but our brave

band took up their march with a quick step, having received food for the way from their host.

Early in the afternoon, Saw Bya picked up a brass button with a blue thread attached. "A button from a police coat," he remarked. A little further on, they found under a shelving rock the remains of a fire. "Here they cooked rice," said Ko Thwah. "Yes," said he after further investigation, "they slept here."

"They marched slowly," replied Ba Kaw. "We shall overtake them soon."

It still rained. They reached a Burman village in the afternoon. A woman was out seeking wood.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"We follow Boh Hline," replied the teacher.

"He was here yesterday," she answered, in a low voice. "He took all our money, and killed two women and a child. They marched to the west."

"Which path?" asked Ba Kaw.

The woman, who had not slackened her pace, brushed the wet hair from her face, and slowly turning her head to see if she was watched from the village, said, "Take the right hand road across the rice fields."

"It is well," replied Ba Kaw.

They then turned sharp across the fields, while the woman made the best of her way homeward.

After travelling some time, it now being late, and having eaten nothing since morning, Ba Kaw said, "Let us stop and eat rice."

The rain had ceased. Hastily cooking rice in bamboos, as already described, they ate, and were off again. Nightfall brought more rain. But though weary and wet, these Karens kept doggedly on their way, determined to run down Boh Hline.

Reaching a small hut, built by some traveller, they stopped for the night. When morning broke, Saw Bya and one of the younger men lay shivering, and burning by turns with fever. Nevertheless, with their clothes bundled about their heads, they pushed on with the rest; their companions carrying their guns.

The sun rose clear, and soon the heat became intense. The men were drenched with perspiration; but their pace was not slackened. It was rather increased, for the footprints of the Dacoits were now plainly visible in the sand of the path before them.

The sun had risen to the zenith, when Kc

Thwah, who was leading, gave a cluck and turning aside, picked up two police coats. They had been cast aside by the Dacoits.

"They are dry," said he, "and the rain drops are on the leaves beneath them. They must have been thrown aside this morning, when the sun became hot."

"Yes, and the cloth about the arm-pit is yet moist," remarked Saw Bya, suddenly getting better of his fever.

"Let us go on. They are near," said Ba Kaw; and each man with the fever took back his gun, as if he had suddenly recovered.

Breaking into a trot, they ran for a half hour, when the leader signalled again and stopped. Then kneeling on the path, he listened for a moment, with his ear to the ground. Then he arose smiling, and every man proceeded to draw the charge from his gun, which had been loaded for two days, and to reload. They then laid aside their jackets and bags behind the roots of a tree, and stole forward, as if stalking deer.

Quickly making a turn in the road, they saw a stream of water flowing past two high banks, through which the road approached the brook, and Ba Kaw signalled another halt. The murmur

of voices was distinctly heard. The Karens drew back from the path into the thick jungle, and Ba Kaw, putting down his gun, advanced on his hands and knees through the bushes to reconnoiter. Drawing near to the edge of the bank, he slowly raised his head, and his eyes blazed with triumph. There was the band of Dacoits within the toss of a betel-nut. They were perfectly unconscious of danger. Some were asleep. Their guns lay scattered about, some with their bundles still attached to them. One young man was tending to the drying of their clothes. Several were cooking food.

Ba Kaw marked the position of each. He counted their number, especially their guns. There were fourteen guns and twenty-one men. Boh Hline was sitting with one of his lieutenants at a little distance from the party, leaning against a tree.

Drawing back as noiselessly as he had advanced, he made his report, and laid the plan of battle. He asked that he be permitted to deal with Boh Hline. He would also lead the charge through the stream. Reaching the opposite bank, they were to pick their men, fire, drop their guns, and rush in with their long knives.

Tightening their clothes about their loins, Ba Kaw gave the word, and they bounded forward in their charge like frightened deer, calling to imaginary followers, and rushed through the brook. When they reached the opposite bank, four shots rang out as one through the jungle, and four Dacoits clutched the sand.

The suddenness of the attack, and the doubt as to how many were following, put the whole company to a precipitate flight, every man for himself.

Ba Kaw, who had reserved his fire, fixed his eye on Boh Hline, and bounding past several fleeing Dacoits, summoned him to surrender or be shot. The Boh continued his flight, when Ba Kaw dropped on one knee and fired. Boh Hline stumbled and fell, and then scrambled to his feet again. But Ba Kaw, throwing down his gun, rushed upon him, caught him by the neck, threw him upon his face, and sat upon his shoulders.

"Bring a cord," he shouted. "He is very little hurt. I put only half a charge of powder in my gun."

He was soon bound, and they had captured Boh Hline.

Hastily gathering the guns, they tied them in

bundles. Among the goods, they found a bag of rupees taken from the village, where they met the Burman woman. Tying the bag around the Dacoit's neck, they prepared to march; and they travelled fast and far before nightfall, when the rain began to pour down again. Boh Hline had three gunshot wounds in his back; but he was not greatly injured. The Karens paid little attention to him. Stopping to eat rice, however, they fed him also, putting his feet in stocks while he ate, to prevent an attempt to escape.

When they had eaten, Ba Kaw said, "Let us worship." And drawing out his hymn book, some one selected for the "evening hymn" one they could all sing. "It is well," said the pastor, and pitching the tune, they sang it through. Then Ba Kaw, while holding the rope about Boh Hline's neck, gave thanks to Yuah for delivering their enemies into their hands.

The astonishment of the Burmans, when they received the money Boh Hline had taken from them, cannot be described; nor can we portray their wonder, as to how five Karens could take so powerful a man out from among his twenty followers, and these well armed, and yet escape

without a scratch. It was all too deep a riddle for them to solve.

The next day the Dacoit chief was handed over to the magistrate in Bassein, and the Karens returned to their homes, the proud possessors of the reward for his capture, and of the thanks of the Queen's officer.

XXVIII

CAPTURE OF THE GREAT PÔNGYI

AFTER the rains, Dacoits broke out afresh all over the country. Boh Hline had been disposed of, indeed, but there were many others just as foolish and cruel as he. Yet it was noticeable that they kept well clear of the Karens, until they were driven among their hills.

About this time the Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, visited Burma, and, as arranged, the Karens waited upon him. They were twelve hundred strong, and more would have come, only that many were detained in watching the Dacoit bands. This large number who appeared manifestly surprised the Queen's officers; for they had prepared a treat of only twenty-five cups of tea for the expected delegation. The Karens had built a triumphal arch in honour of the Viceroy, and at the reception the school girls sang, and drank the tea; while the Viceroy made a congratulatory address, which sent all happy to their homes. They were specially pleased to know

that the Viceroy recognized their services in quelling the insurrection in the country.

Later, came the Queen's Jubilee. Here Than-bya, as appointed by the Dau-ka-lu, presented a memorial to Her Majesty. This would interest the reader, but it must be omitted on account of its length. In every respect it was a model paper, —a credit to the writer and to his people. It recounted the great good which had come to the Hillmen through her gracious rule; and also touched upon their own services to the Government during the insurrection, as a token of their loyalty and gratitude. It further expressed their hopes for future progress under her beneficent reign; and closed by invoking the blessing of God upon Her Majesty.

There were yet some of the Queen's officers who could not understand these Karens; and so, as they were departing from the Government house, an officer addressed Than-bya rather brusquely, saying, "Hallo, old chap, did you write all that fine speech yourself, or did some one do it for you?"

Than-bya made no reply, and the officer repeated his question in a more deferential tone. Than-bya after a short pause said deliberately,

without regarding his questioner, "Well, if I didn't write it, I wonder who did."

Even while the Viceroy was in Burma, perhaps the most formidable outbreak that had yet taken place, sprung up in the eastern part of the province. A Pôngyi, or Buddhist priest, was the leader. He was said to have over a thousand followers, mostly Shans, in the early part of his career, and he soon looted and burned a score of villages and towns.

This Pôngyi was a man of large stature, great cunning, and his followers rapidly multiplied. Every day a new town was looted or destroyed. The Burmese subjects of the Queen were growing very restless, and it looked as if the success of the Dacoits would cause a general uprising among them.

The Europeans also grew much alarmed; for even the telegraph wires were torn down, and the railroads were threatened. Small bands of English soldiers were hurrying to and fro, trying to quell the uprising; but it was daily growing worse. Every European was armed, and did patrol duty. Several had been killed.

Here again the Hillmen came to the rescue. A large city was attacked by the forces of the

Pôngyi; but by the help of the Karens they were repulsed, and retreated to the foothills. They were more than a thousand strong. The Karens, following their retreat, repeatedly attacked and defeated them, capturing the detached parties they met. So fierce were these attacks, that the Pôngyi's forces were driven back into the mountains, seeking safety from their pursuers. But the mountains proved a worse place for them than the plains; for here too the Karens swarmed about them like wasps, stinging whenever a chance offered.

The priest's forces were also encumbered greatly with women and children. So sure was this fanatic that he would be able to defeat the English, he had attached these to his army, as if on a triumphal march. He even took along with him his gray haired mother, whom he caused to be carried on a litter.

As his troubles increased, his followers rapidly diminished. In order that their hiding and camping places might not be revealed to his pursuers, he ordered the little children to be killed whenever any of them cried.

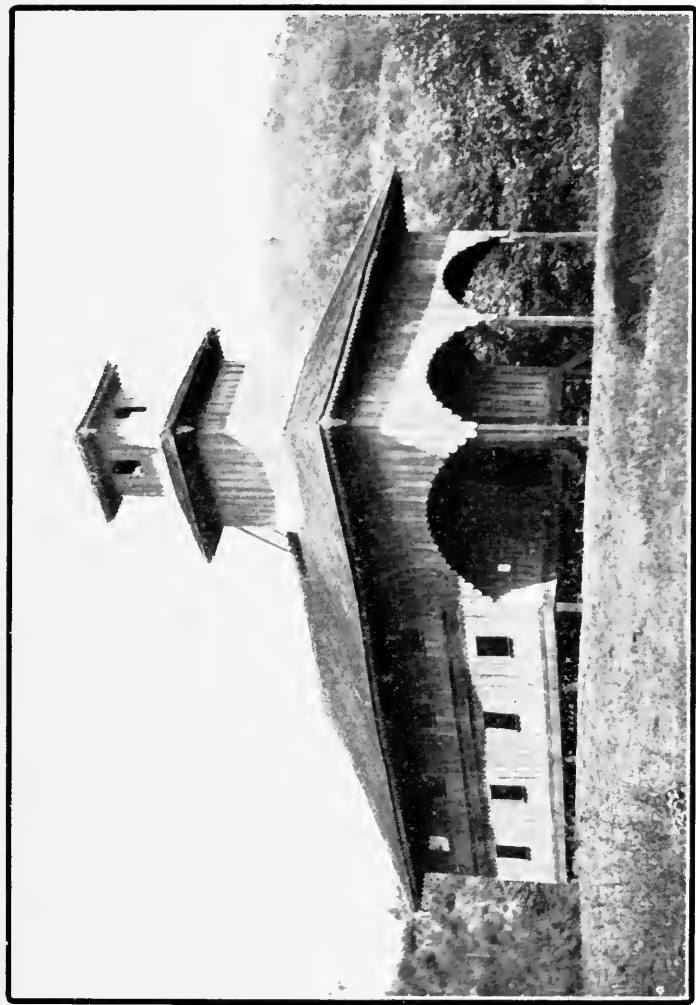
Many of the Karens were now being supplied with Government arms and ammunition. The

Queen's officers were beginning to trust them more and more. Otherwise the results of this insurrection might have been very different from the final outcome. Doubtless the revolt would have become general, and perhaps have accomplished what the Pôngyi threatened,—a complete slaughter of the Europeans.

The Dacoits now retreated northward, several hundred strong, destroying Karen villages, but were in turn continually harassed by the Hillmen.

Ka-la-maw, whom we met at the Dau-ka-lu, did grand service, repeatedly attacking the bands sent out for food, and capturing many prisoners. They fought these robbers even with fire, setting the jungle ablaze, where they were in hiding. In this manner they were forced gradually northward along the mountains, till they reached the southern borders of Soo Thah's country. Here the priest attacked a Christian village, while the annual meeting was in session in a town near by. The meeting broke up immediately, and the men in attendance rushed to the defence of their brethren.

One Sunday morning the Dacoits appeared in a Christian village while all were assembled for worship. They surrounded the chapel so sud-



THE DAU-KA-LU PLACE OF ASSEMBLY.

denly, that all the worshipers were taken prisoners. They had, however, taken the precaution to hide their guns in the jungle on Saturday night. The Dacoits robbed the villagers of their food, but spared them. They showed their spite against the religion of the Deliverer by cutting the Bible and hymn books in pieces, and scattering the pieces over the floor. Then the Pôngyi, taking his seat in the pulpit chair, called the meeting to order, and declared the religion of Jesus abolished. The villagers remained quiet until Monday morning, when the robbers had departed, and then drew out their arms, and, led by their teacher, boldly attacked the rear guard. Several were killed on both sides, including the brave pastor and two of his followers.

The Dacoits were so frightened by this bold attack, that they began to separate, and soon bands appeared in Soo Thah's country, ravaging and destroying as in other places. Soo Thah sent off messengers post haste to the white teacher for help, saying, "Teacher, the Pôngyi and his army have arrived. They are destroying our chapels and eating up our food. They have killed teacher Thau Lay and two of his people. Get us guns, and we will defend our chapels."

The white teacher wrote a note, called a Karen boy, and said, "Take this to the Magistrate, and wait for an answer."

Meanwhile Mya-u, the son of Meh-teh, the old prophet, both of whom we met at the Dau-ka-lu, entered and said, "Teacher, the Dacoits will eat up our country, and destroy our chapels and school houses."

"Yes," he replied. "What will you Karens do?"

"Get guns for us, and we will capture the Pôngyi, as our brothers did Boh Hline," answered Mya-u.

"But they are very many," said the teacher.

"True, but I have twenty-five well drilled Karen levies; and with twenty or thirty more guns, carried by our Karens, we can capture him."

Mya-u had recently been made governor of the Hillmen in his district, in place of a Shan, who had been dismissed for bribery. While he was yet talking, the Magistrate's reply came, saying, that he had telegraphed for guns, which would be delivered the next day. He had in this emergency cast aside all red tape, and thus manifested his faith in this brown people. For he knew them

well, and was always among their staunchest friends.

"It is well, Mya-u," said the teacher. "Call in your men, and we will give them guns to-morrow."

Messengers were sent to the hills at once, and the next day the Mission yard was full of volunteers. The guns and ammunition were distributed, and all day the Karens marched toward the seat of war.

The second day by sundown the armed men had reached their homes with a few guns for the defence of each village. Soo Thah secured one gun for the protection of his people. Mya-u with his levies and volunteers pushed directly for the reported camp of the Dacoits.

The Karens had besought their white teacher to go along with them. It was well he went; for he was able to save lives, since some of the Karens were so exasperated by the loss of their homes and food, that they were liable to use undue measures of violence, even towards these cruel murderers.

By the second night prisoners began to arrive brought to the white teacher by the scouts. Mes-

sengers were also arriving for medicines for the wounded. The rebels had broken up into small bands, and there was fighting all over the hills. Saw Hah came in and reported three Karens shot, a half day's journey to the north, and asked for medicines for their wounds. Ka-ta-kee villagers brought in three prisoners, and so it went all night.

In the morning a Karen came from Soo Thah's village, saying, "Has the teacher heard the news from Soo Thah?"

"No. What is it, brother?"

"We believe he has captured the great chief, the Pôngyi."

"What! the one for whom the five thousand rupees are offered?" was asked.

"The same man," replied the messenger. "Yet we are in some doubt."

"Tell us about it," responded another.

"When Soo Thah received his gun," he replied, "he went patrolling on the path leading from his village in the direction where the Dacoits were supposed to be approaching. He had heard of them at neighbouring villages the night before, and feared they might come to his own. Not far down the path, he met fourteen men, the two

leaders carrying guns. The rest were loaded with stolen rice. When they saw Soo Thah, the foremost tried to shoot him; but his gun missed fire. Then the second raised his gun to shoot, but Soo Thah was too quick for him. All the rest quickly fled."

"Why do you think he is the great Pôngyi?" asked one.

"Because he has a lot of charms about him, and belts of money, and his gun is a fine one, quite new," said the messenger.

It did not prove, however, to be the leader of this insurrection, whom Mya-u was seeking, but one of his lieutenants. Soo Thah was afterwards thanked by the Queen's officers, and rewarded by the gift of the gun.

Prisoners continued to be brought in rapidly. The excitement was at a white heat. A little later messengers reported, that Mya-u was returning with a large number of prisoners.

"Has he caught the Pôngyi?" was the question every one was asking his neighbour.

One replied, "He would not return without him. He said he would not."

The question was soon solved, as the band marched up the hillside into the village.

"Well, Mya-u, what have you found?" asked the teacher.

"The Pôngyi, I think," he quietly answered.

"Did you capture him, Mya-u?" was asked.

"No," he replied. "Two women were the means of his capture."

"How was that?" asked another.

"Why," said he, "I took my levees to his camp, but found it deserted. The Karens had attacked him again. Several were left dead on the ground. This seemed to break up the band. They were very hungry also, for the boys harassed them so, they did not have time to cook rice."

Here he was interrupted by the arrival of the Pôngyi himself; for he proved to be the man so much desired. He was led by three ropes, one about his neck, one about his waist, and the third tied to his bound hands; and each rope was held by a watchful sentry; for he was a very powerful man.

Soo Thah, who also had come in, said to Mya-u, "Brother, how was he captured?"

"Why, he became very hungry and went to a village over on the watershed yonder. He evidently thought he had got beyond the hated Christians, and was safe. So he offered gold to

two women for food. The men had guns, and were near by watching another road for the robbers. One woman gave him food, while the other summoned the guards. One of the guards walked quietly behind him, as he was eating, and catching a woman's skirt from the wall, pulled it over his head, and after a brief struggle he was overpowered and bound."

"But this wound in his head?" asked Soo Thah.

"O, this morning," rejoined Mya-u, "we pitied him, and loosed his hands, in order that he might eat rice; and he nearly escaped. He knocked over several of the guards in his rush, but Soo Baw brought him down with the butt of his gun."

In private Mya-u remarked to the white teacher, "He is very rich. He has bags of money and precious stones. Yesterday he called me and said, 'You are a great man. So am I. I have great riches: elephants, buffaloes, gold, silver and precious stones. Let me escape, and I will give you what you ask.'"

"What did you reply to him, Mya-u?"

"'Why,' I said, 'were you able to give me heaven and earth, I would not let you go.'"

“ It is well, Mya-u. He will kill no more children, nor burn any more chapels. Thank Yuah, who has delivered him into your hands. Tomorrow we return.”

Reaching the mission compound in the great city, it was found that the Karens had captured in this expedition eighty prisoners, with the leader of the insurrection, and large sums of gold and silver, which had been taken from the towns the Dacoits had destroyed. All these captures were turned over to the officers of Her Majesty.

There was, of course, great rejoicing among all Europeans, when it was announced that the head of the rebellion had been captured; and there was equally great surprise, that this brown people had accomplished what the heavy-footed soldiers of Her Majesty had failed to do.

The reader will be interested to know that the generous victors, to whom a reward of five thousand rupees was paid, instead of retaining this money for themselves, first recompensed therefrom those who had lost their property, and contributed the balance, a handsome sum, in aid of their schools.

This victory practically destroyed the insurrection in lower Burma. The results to the Karens themselves will be told in the next chapter.

XXIX

CONCLUSION

OUR story is nearly completed. It remains merely to note some important matters that should not be omitted.

After the capture narrated in the last chapter, our Hillmen sprang into general favour with the Queen's officers. They were enlisted in considerable numbers, and performed such excellent services for Her Majesty, that they were soon incorporated among the standing defenders of the country. And since then it has been proposed to form them into regiments of the line, or of the regular army.

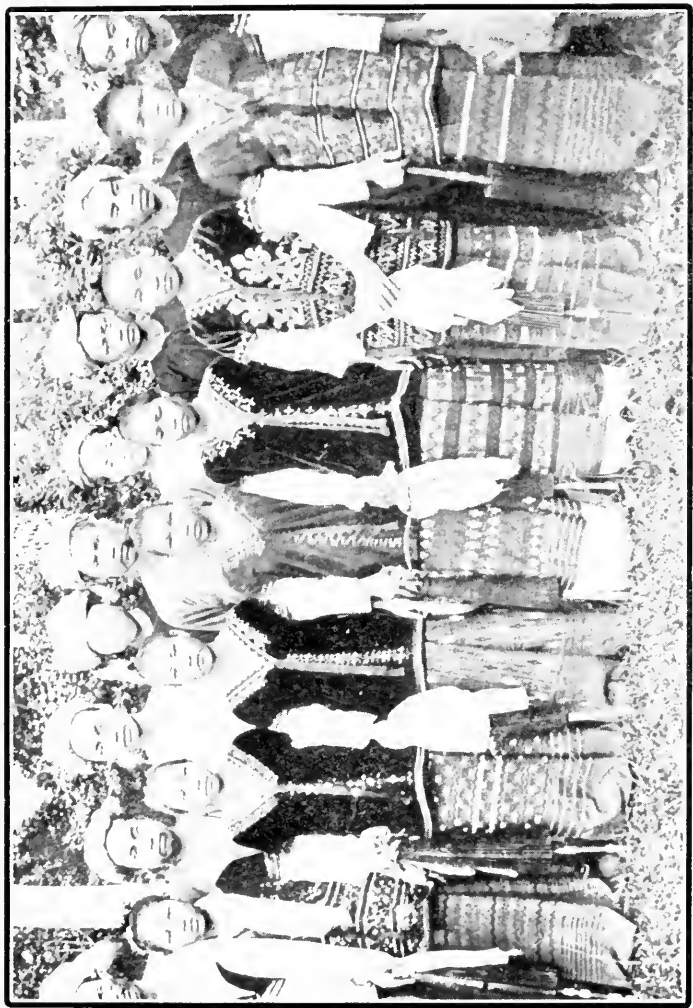
The praise of their fidelity, bravery, discipline and trustworthiness has been unstinted among the Queen's officers who commanded them. One of the highest officers of the Indian Government has borne this testimony: "But for the loyalty and courage of the Karens, the rebel Burmese and Shans would, in all probability, have overrun lower Burma."

Again he says, "The Karen people have proved their loyalty by freely shedding their blood in defence of our rule, and in the cause of order. In the face of neglect, they have served us nobly and well." And again, "Until in sheer despair, the Karens rose to defend their own hearths and homes the Burmese rebels and robbers had it all their own way. . . . The story of the deeds and sufferings of the Karens in defence of the Queen-Empress Government in Burma, is a deeply interesting one, and deserves an honoured place in the records of the Empire."

Thus through the mighty power of the Deliverer, our Lord Jesus Christ, was a nation born in a day, and given a place of honour among Her Majesty's subjects in the East.

Their future, judging from the past, will be glorious; that is, so long as they remain faithful to the Deliverer, who has led them out of bondage and degradation into Christian freedom and manhood.

Our story, dealing as it does with the Hillmen, might lead some to think that there had been no successes of our Lord among the idolatrous Burmans. This would be far from true. Several thousands of the Burmans have been converted



KAREN CHRISTIANS.

to Christ. And then it costs much more for a Burman to forsake his ancestral religion, and join the followers of Christ, than it does for a Karen to give up his nat superstitions. It is also needless to say, that these noble Christians among the Burmans have been most loyal to their Queen, and friendly to their Karen brothers.

This story would have failed also, if it had not fixed your attention upon these Hillmen in all southeastern Asia as a most inviting mission field, —a harvest ready for the reaper; and also as a source from which to draw hardy, brave and devoted preachers, teachers, evangelists and missionaries for the world about them.

We can say without reserve, that they present one of the most promising fields for missionary effort in all the world. But just here lies a great danger. It would be a fatal mistake to conclude that these Hillmen, having made such progress in the past, were now able to care for themselves. Nay, they never needed wise counsellors more than now. Like the Japanese, they are full of vigour and hope; but they are inexperienced in all that makes up a wise Christian civilization.

They still need and imperatively require wise men as leaders, organizers' and trainers, to pre-

pare them for the Deliverer's use among their own people, and to carry the glad tidings to peoples beyond them. Should Christians in America fail to supply this present need, in a few years their grand opportunity may have slipped from their grasp. Here, as on some other fields, our very successes have become our peril.

I doubt not that every reader has come to love our hero, Soo Thah, together with his gentle wife, Wee-thah-soo. The latter still lives to care for her children and grandchildren; but Soo Thah, in an effort to establish a new mission among a tribe to the north, was attacked by cholera, and passed quickly to his reward.

There are many to rise up and call him blessed, for his works follow him, to the glory of the Deliverer, the great Son of Yuah; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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